



SAY IT AIN'T SO! BLAKE AND MIRANDA FILE FOR DIVORCE

NASH Country Weekly

NEW LOOK!

COUNTRY FOR LIFE | AUGUST 10, 2015

**NASH
NEXT**
ARTIST SPOTLIGHT
CHASE RICE

**SCOTTY
McCREERY
& HUNTER
HAYES**
LIFT LIVES
FOR ACM
CAMPER

**KEITH
URBAN'S**
DEERE
JOHN
SONG

**5 THINGS
THAT MAKE**
**ASHLEY
MONROE**
HAPPY

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TOBY KEITH gets real
about his songwriting
and what it means to
him to be inducted
into the Songwriters
Hall of Fame

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1997 THURSDAY,
AUG. 7



Garth Takes Manhattan

A 360-foot-wide stage, 21 cameras and an estimated 600,000 attendees—those were just some of the astounding numbers associated with a special **GARTH BROOKS** concert in New York City's Central Park on Aug. 7, 1997. And it was a show of monumental importance. HBO was on hand to film the concert as it happened for the network's special *Garth Live From Central Park*, which millions were expected to watch.

Before the big day, Garth admitted that he felt a bit nervous. Central Park had hosted several concerts in the past, from superstars like Barbra Streisand, Simon & Garfunkel and Diana Ross, but none on a scale this grand. "We'll see how it's going to go," Garth said. "We're just going to go out and do our thing and play, and try to represent country music the best we can."

Garth took on the challenge and pulled it off. Officials noted that the crowd loomed closer to 1 million fans, making it the largest concert ever held in the Big Apple landmark. The country star treated the crowd to favorites like "Rodeo," "Papa Loved Mama" and "Friends in Low Places." He also gave the show a local flavor by bringing out New York's own Billy Joel for duets on Billy's hits "You May Be Right" and, naturally, "New York State of Mind."

Left: courtesy Sandbox Ent.; Blake by Stephen Lovelace/Getty Images; Luke & Amy by Lou Rocco/ABC; Garth by Bob Strong/Getty Images

2015

AUG. 4: ROCK THIS COUNTRY

If you couldn't make it to Music City for this year's CMA Music Festival, you can still catch some of the musical highlights and behind-the-scenes fun on the ABC special *CMA Music Festival: Country's Night to Rock*, airing on Tuesday night, Aug. 4, at 8 p.m. ET. **LITTLE BIG TOWN** returns as host for the always highly rated show.



AUG. 6-8: WHO FESTS? WE DO

Head way up north to Detroit Lakes, Minn. (not Detroit, Mich.), for the annual WE Fest, Aug. 6-8. The smokin' lineup of **BLAKE SHELTON, MIRANDA LAMBERT, DIERKS BENTLEY, JAKE OWEN** and other acts will heat up those cool Upper Midwest nights. For more info go to wefest.com.



AUG. 7: SUMMER SOUNDS

LUKE BRYAN provides the fun in the sun as he headlines *Good Morning America's Summer Concert Series* on ABC, Friday morning, Aug. 7, from New York's Central Park. By more than coincidence, it's also the day that Luke's new album, *Kill the Lights*, hits stores, so expect a few tracks from that record. *Good Morning America* airs from 7 to 9 a.m. ET.



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After more than 20 years in the business, **TOBY KEITH** finally received the honor he always wanted—induction into the Songwriters Hall of Fame.

PLUS!



27 CHASE RICE,

not one to mince his words, believes that there's more to country songwriting than tunes about tailgating and tan lines. And he's ready to show that deeper, more personal side of himself on his future records.



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How To Select the *NEXT* Country Music Superstar!



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*The image shown of the "Ceremonies" is used with permission for promotional purposes only.

NASH
NEXT

FAN VOTING OPENS JULY 27, 2015...

You can help put your favorite country music performer, or band into the finals by visiting www.nashnextcountry.com, or download the free NASH NEXT mobile app available in the App Store or Google Play.

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FROM THE EDITOR



Dear Readers,

There's one thing that Toby Keith loves to talk about and that's songwriting. The singer was recently inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame, which, as he reveals in our cover story, is the only honor he's ever wanted. The writer of "Should've Been a Cowboy" and many others sits down with us to talk about the award and chasing an idea. You can see how passionate Toby is about his craft as he explains his process and how he has sharpened his skills over the years. And Toby also shares a little songwriting

advice for all you aspiring songwriters out there. So check out our cover story on page 40.

In the Nash Next section, we catch up with Chase Rice, who has seen his single "Ready Set Roll" sell more than 1 million downloads. Now he's rolling on to more exciting times, like opening for Kenny Chesney on the Big Revival Tour and releasing his latest single, "Ride," to radio. Check out that section to see what Chase is up to now.

Speaking of Nash Next, we hope you are all aware of the Nash Next Challenge competition that is taking place online and allows you to be part of picking country's next radio star. It's fun to watch the new talent rise in the ranks and it's really up to you, the fans, as to how well they do. So go to nashnextcountry.com and pick your favorite contestants and become a part of the fun.

Don't miss next week's issue, on stands Aug. 10, as we catch up with country's hottest star, Luke Bryan.

SEE YOU NEXT WEEK!

LISA KONICKI, EDITOR IN CHIEF

LETTERS GIVING PROPS

Being a single man and working two jobs and not having much time to enjoy concerts or entertainment venues like I used to, I'm writing to tell you and the country music fans in the world that this magazine is the best information on the country music world that I adore and always will. I would like to see more concert shows and when artists are coming to our town. I would really appreciate if this could be available in upcoming issues of this wonderful magazine. Thank you very much.



DAVID FITZWATER
Reisterstown, Md.

EDITOR'S REPLY:

Thank you, David, we appreciate your kind words. You can check out our On Tour page to see when your favorite artist is coming to a town near you.

TWITTER

@countryweekly @KeithUrban love him! One of the best live performers and still one of my favorite concerts I've ever been to.



LOREEN VS
@allyant

I swear @countryweekly is by far the best magazine anybody could read. Always keeps people reading and always up to date. Job well done!



DEREK AITKEN
@DerekAitken98

@countryweekly she's amazing! You totally need to put an article about @TheCourtneyCole in one of your future magazine issues!



STEVE DITCH
@SteveDitch

FACEBOOK:

We Canadians love us some Keith [Urban]!!



**KIM BOND
BLAKE**

I don't think he [Luke Bryan] gives a rats a*# about critics, he's got plenty of fans & making bank.



**BRAD
PICKETT**

FROM THE READER



Shoot us an email, a comment or a tweet and let us know what you think!

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**NASH Country
Weekly**

COUNTRY FOR LIFE

FIRST TAKE

FIELD OF DREAMS

During his Big Revival Tour at Philadelphia's Lincoln Financial Field, Kenny Chesney proved that if he plays it, people will come—a record 55,131 of them.







Putting *literacy*
center stage.



Your ticket shows you care

Use the code "TEACH" when purchasing Grand Ole Opry August show tickets, and a portion of the proceeds will go to support literacy efforts as part of the Opry's 90th Anniversary Cause for Applause initiative.

Kleenex
SOMEONE NEEDS ONE



SEPTEMBER 28, 2010

Country Comes Home

The Grand Ole Opry was temporarily displaced from its permanent home when more than four feet of floodwater inundated the Grand Ole Opry House on May 2, 2010. Throughout that summer the Opry was staged in various locations around Nashville while the Opry House was transformed from a flooded venue to a country music showplace. By early fall it was time for country to come home to the Opry House. Among those who opened the show with "Will the Circle Be Unbroken"—to a rousing standing ovation and more than a few tears—were **JASON ALDEAN, BILL ANDERSON, CHARLIE DANIELS, MARTINA MCBRIDE, BRAD PAISLEY** and **BLAKE SHELTON**, who was invited to become an official Opry member later that night.

This year, it's reading, writing and *caring.*

We can help America learn to read.



Together, Dollar General and KLEENEX® are donating \$50,000 to a local school for literacy.

Dollar General, a history of caring

Since 1993, the Dollar General Literacy Foundation has awarded more than \$100 million in grants to nonprofit organizations and schools that have helped more than 6 million individuals learn to read, prepare for the high school equivalency test or learn the English language.

Setting the stage for literacy

As part of the Grand Ole Opry's 90th Anniversary Cause for Applause initiative, the Opry will donate a portion of ticket sales, welcome special guest announcers and present exclusive content on opry.com all in the name of literacy.

Show you care

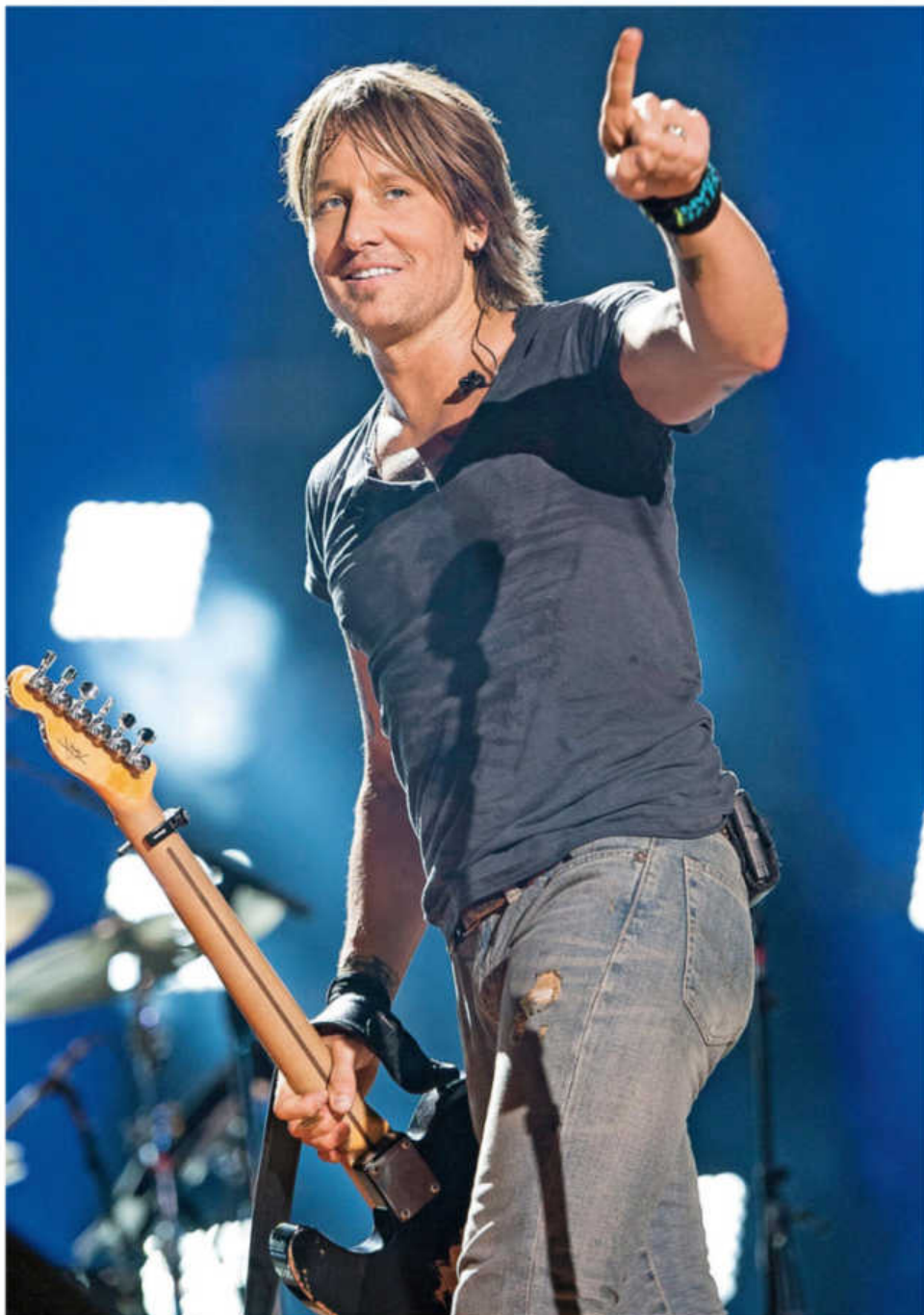
Show your support by shopping Kleenex® at Dollar General and visiting the Grand Ole Opry® this August. You can also donate directly at dollargeneral/dgliteracy.com

Kleenex
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THE COUNTRY BREW

A SWEET TASTE OF ALL THINGS COUNTRY

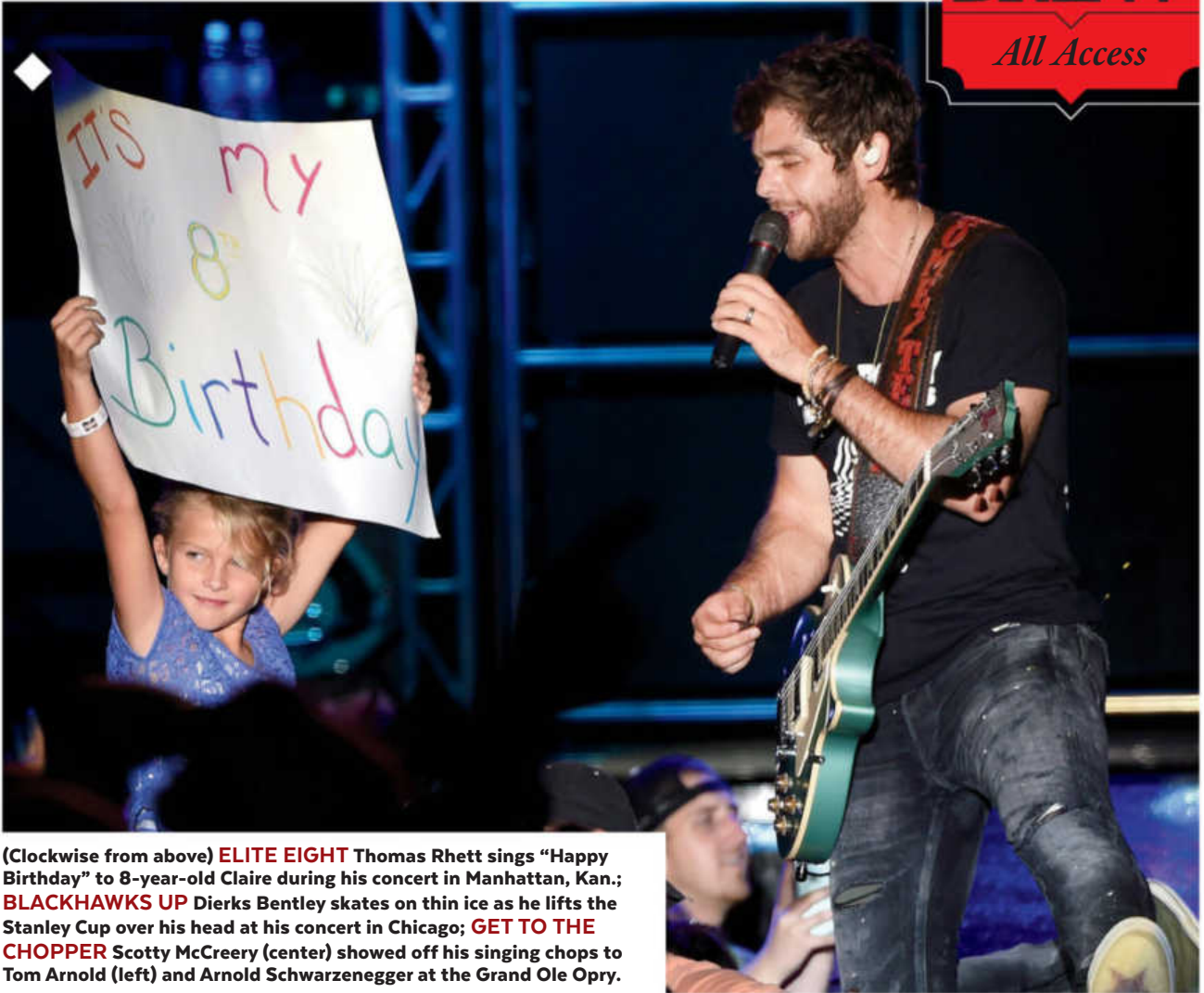
Opening Act



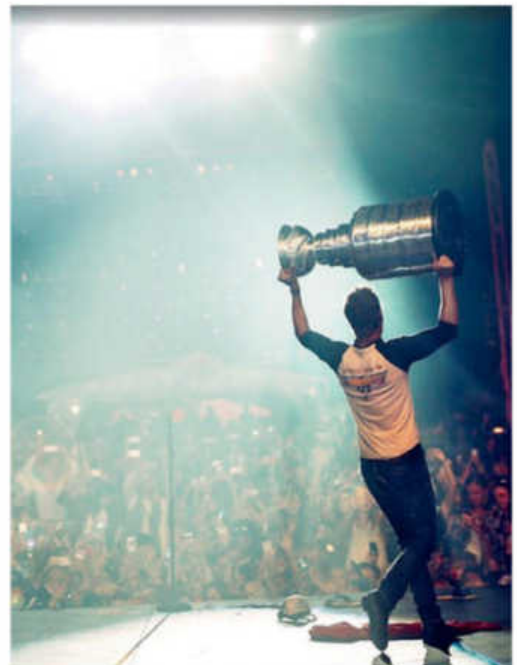
PLAZA PICKIN'

Need a Friday morning wake-up call? **KEITH URBAN** has your number. The multi-talented superstar will help the *Today* show celebrate the 20th anniversary of its Toyota Concert Series with his performance on Friday, Aug. 7. The sounds of Keith's hits will be reverberating throughout New York City's Rockefeller Plaza, where most of the concert series' shows are held. Don't forget—the *Today* show airs on NBC from 7 to 10 a.m. in all time zones.

photo by Jason Moore



(Clockwise from above) **ELITE EIGHT** Thomas Rhett sings “Happy Birthday” to 8-year-old Claire during his concert in Manhattan, Kan.; **BLACKHAWKS UP** Dierks Bentley skates on thin ice as he lifts the Stanley Cup over his head at his concert in Chicago; **GET TO THE CHOPPER** Scotty McCreery (center) showed off his singing chops to Tom Arnold (left) and Arnold Schwarzenegger at the Grand Ole Opry.





(Above left) **RIDICU-LIST** (from left) David Spade as General Custer, Blake Shelton as Wyatt Earp and Vanilla Ice as Mark Twain set a new standard for the absurd on the set of Adam Sandler's new movie, *The Ridiculous 6*; (above right) **OUT FOR BLOOD** Hunter Hayes kicks back while donating blood to the American Red Cross; (below) **AT THE TOP, YEP YEP** Dustin Lynch (left) was presented with a platinum plaque by RIAA CEO Cary Sherman certifying sales of 1 million units for "Where It's At."



(Above) **THE WILLIE WAY** Kacey Musgraves gives Willie Nelson four more reasons to be happy.



(Above) **BIRTHDAY WISH** On his 32nd birthday, Cole Swindell (right) wished to be just like Kenny Chesney when he grows up; (right) **TEACH THE CHILDREN WELL** Dolly Parton (left) presents Dyane Smokorowsky with the Chasing Rainbows Award, an annual prize that honors one outstanding educator for overcoming a great obstacle to teach children; (below) **THAT IMPRESSES US MUCH** Shania Twain officially launches her Kids Can campaign for at-risk children at Hjorth Elementary School in Vancouver, B.C.



(Above) **TEXAS TOAST** The Lone Star State tips its hat to Kentucky native Chris Stapleton by making him an honorary Texan.

WELCOME BILLY CURRINGTON



(Clockwise from above) **STAR POWER** Billy Currington performs during the 2015 MLB All-Star Legends and Celebrity Softball Game; **BASH BROTHERS** (from left) Justin Moore and actors Chad Lowe and Josh Hutcherson suit up for the softball game; **LODI DODI** Snoop Dogg and Billy C. like to party.





(Clockwise from above left) **MOORE POWER** Justin Moore ropes one; **ON THE PROGRAM** Justin commemorates the day with a program and a pic with the fans; **SWINGING SWIN** Cole Swindell has his eye on the ball; **SUNDAY FANDAY** Cole leans in to get a pic with a young fan.



REDS, WHITES AND BLUES A fireworks display followed the MLB All-Star Game concert at Paul Brown Stadium in Cincinnati.

BLAKE & MIRANDA CALL IT QUILTS

A little more than four years after they said “I do,” country superstars **BLAKE SHELTON** and **MIRANDA LAMBERT** have announced they are divorcing.

“This is not the future we envisioned,” the couple said in a statement to the Associated Press. “And it is with heavy hearts that we move forward separately. We are real people, with real lives, with real families, friends and colleagues. Therefore, we kindly ask for privacy and compassion concerning this very personal matter.”

Blake and Miranda’s relationship dates back 10 years, when they first met and performed together during the taping of CMT’s *100 Greatest Duets*. They married in May 2011 at Don Strange Ranch, outside San Antonio, Texas, and settled in Tishomingo, Okla.

The couple was dogged by rumors of divorce and infidelity throughout the relationship but adopted an almost joking air about the matter in public. While together, both Blake and Miranda have risen to become two of country’s biggest stars, with her repeatedly winning the CMA and ACM awards for Female Vocalist of the Year and him becoming a household name through *The Voice* and hit singles like “Boys ‘Round Here.”



Let the Love Flow

The **BELLAMY BROTHERS**, Howard and younger sibling David, are playing off their timeless crossover hit “Let Your Love Flow” for an important social cause. The duo has teamed with Susan G. Komen, the world’s largest breast cancer organization, for a new campaign to help fund breast cancer research and educational programs.



From now through Dec. 31, one dollar from every U.S. iTunes download of the Bellamys’ *40 Years* album will be donated to Susan G. Komen. The album showcases 20 Bellamy Brothers classics along with 20 new tunes.

To further show their support for the national campaign, Howard and David recently shot a music video of “Let Your Love Flow” in Texas featuring 60 breast cancer survivors. “We had a lot of fun with those ladies at the video shoot,” Howard recalled. “They were all having a great time and singing along to every word.”

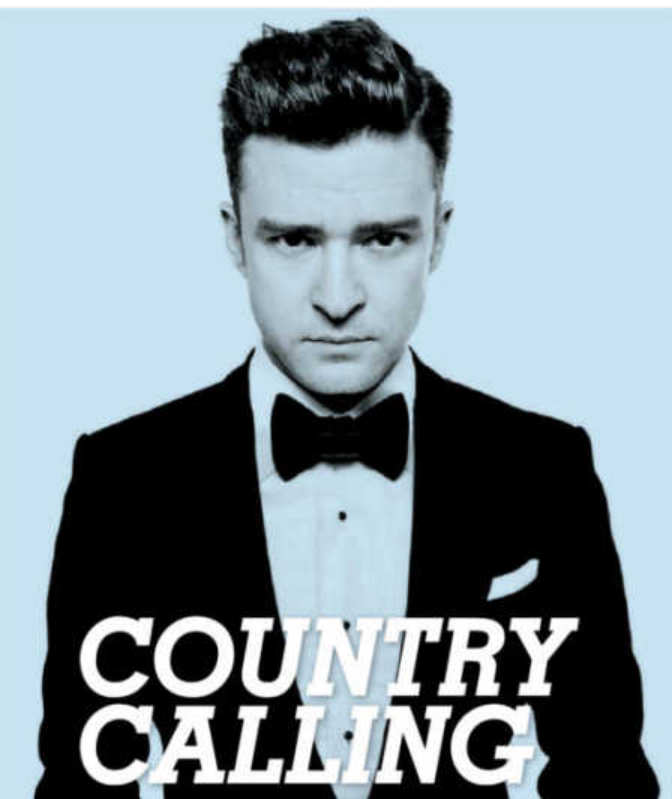
The brothers have also crafted a new #LetYourLoveFlow T-shirt that will be sold at their concerts, with a portion of the sales going to the Komen organization. “We’ve had so many people in our lives who have been affected by this terrible disease,” David noted. “We hope the money raised will go a long way to help those out there who are fighting for their lives.”

ROSANNE-IN-RESIDENCE



Tell me you’re trying to cure a seven-year ache, and we’ll tell you to head to the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, where **ROSANNE CASH** has been named the 2015 artist-in-residence. The annual honor recognizes an artist who has made a significant contribution to American popular music, and Rosanne has certainly done that. She’ll celebrate with three shows at the Hall of Fame: Sept. 2 with her band,

Sept. 3 with **EMMYLOU HARRIS** and **LUCINDA WILLIAMS** and Sept. 24 with her husband, musician/songwriter/producer **JOHN LEVENTHAL**. Previous artists-in-residence include **ALAN JACKSON**, **VINCE GILL**, **KENNY ROGERS** and **KRIS KRISTOFFERSON**.



Memphis-born pop star **JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE** recently dropped \$4 million on a 126-acre property just outside of Nashville. Justin's real estate investment could be

an investment in his future, as it has been speculated that he is interested in crossing over to the country genre. The not-so-far-fetched idea gained



some traction in December when Justin joined **GARTH BROOKS** onstage at Nashville's Bridgestone Arena for a surprise duet of "Friends in Low Places."

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RADIO LEG DROP

In "say what?" news, reality star **BROOKE HOGAN**—daughter to Hulk—is wrestling with the idea of a career in country music. A flurry of recent press releases noted that her debut country single, "Girlfriend," will be out in August and appear on an EP titled *I Wanna Be Your Girlfriend*. "People might think I'm a reality star that had a sudden urge to try my hand in music," Brooke said in a release. "When, in fact, it's the other way around. I took dance and piano lessons and sang long before the show concepts were created."



WIN A REAL GOOD TIME

YOU COULD WIN A CABIN ON THE COUNTRY MUSIC CRUISE!



How would you like to hit the high seas with **KENNY ROGERS, RANDY OWEN, THE OAK RIDGE BOYS, MEL TILLIS, KATHY MATTEA** and many more? You and a guest have a chance to join them on **THE COUNTRY MUSIC CRUISE** (January 16–23, 2015). Prize includes a double-occupancy cabin, port taxes and fees, regularly scheduled meals on the ship and all shows and events open to the cruising public.

To enter, visit CountryWeekly.com. Entry deadline is August 17, 2015. Winner is responsible for all onboard purchases and excursions during the cruise. The prize does not include any transportation to and from the port of embarkation, ground transportation and gratuities. If you don't win the prize, you can still get special savings by using the code **COUNTRYWEEKLY** when you make your reservations for this unique journey. To book your passage on The Country Music Cruise and for more information, go to countrymusiccruise.com or call **877-266-2686**.

HALL, YEAH

The Country Music Hall of Fame's benefit concert, All for the Hall, brings thousands of fans to Nashville's Bridgestone Arena every



May. It's been such a huge success that, since 2007, country's biggest stars have been taking their talents to the Big Apple for **ALL FOR THE HALL NEW YORK**. On Oct. 6, **VINCE GILL, BRAD PAISLEY, CARRIE UNDERWOOD** and **EMMYLOU HARRIS** will take the stage at the Best Buy Theater in

Times Square to benefit the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum's education programs. Tickets are still available, so go to countrymusichalloffame.org for more info.



GOOD TIMES

With her recently released single, "On to Something Good," bringing a smile to our faces, we asked **ASHLEY MONROE** to list five things that make her happy.

1. MUSIC
2. CHOCOLATE
3. MY TOOTHLESS DOGS
4. MY FAMILY
5. MY HUSBAND

BIRTHDAYS

Aug. 3, 1966
Dean Sams
of Lonestar

Aug. 3, 1984
Whitney Duncan

Aug. 5, 1968
Terri Clark

Aug. 7, 1942
B.J. Thomas

Aug. 7, 1950
Rodney Crowell

Aug. 7, 1959
Michael Peterson

Aug. 7, 1965
Raul Malo of
The Mavericks

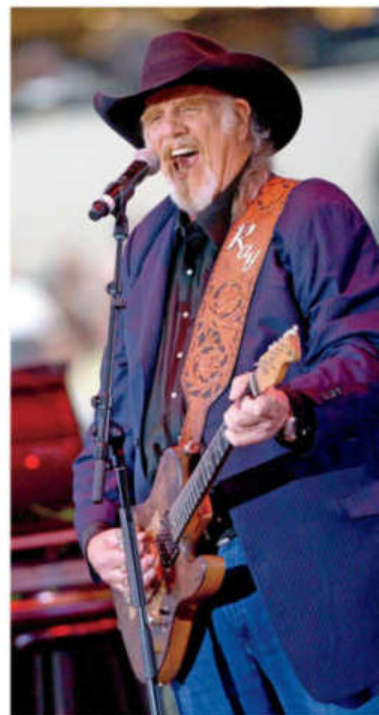
Aug. 8, 1932
Mel Tillis

Aug. 8, 1939
Phil Balsley
of The Statler
Brothers

Aug. 8, 1973
Mark Wills

RAY'S BANNER YEAR

ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL leader **RAY BENSON** has begun hosting his own radio show, *Austin Outer Limits* on Sirius XM's Willie's Roadhouse. The hour-long program airs biweekly and features the venerable Ray playing handpicked selections of Western swing, Texas music and honky-tonk. Additionally, Philadelphia native Ray is one of seven honorees to earn a spot on the Philadelphia Music Walk of Fame in 2015. The formal presentation will be made on Oct. 26. For more information on *Austin Outer Limits* show times, check siriusxm.com.



Sonia's Song

Singer/songwriter **SONIA LEIGH**, who hit the country charts with her 2011 single "My Name Is Money," recently made headlines by writing a passionate op-ed for *The Gay UK*. In the piece, Sonia wrote that she resists labeling as anything other than a musician but has loved both women and men throughout her life.

"I am a person who follows my heart," she noted. "When I fall in love I



let myself and will always let myself love who my heart tells me to."

Whether because no one ever asked or some other reason, Sonia never re-

ally felt the need to discuss her sexuality until now but says she never felt any discrimination from people who suspected or knew.

"Maybe I am the 'Ellen' of country," she jokes.

As for what may quell the often-rancorous discussion of the subject, Sonia thinks exposure to new ideas and shifting focus back to the music.

"Let's open the doors and let some music in and celebrate life together. That's what it's really about in the end," she says. "Not numbers, hit records and money. It's about living life to the fullest and connecting with each other while we are given this gift of life!"

MATCH-UP

In our July 20 issue, we matched male country performers with their universities. Here we list 12 female country singers who either attended or graduated from the colleges below. Can you guess their institutions of higher learning? Give it a try.



A UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA



B BROWN UNIVERSITY



C MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY



D EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY



E SANTA MONICA COLLEGE



F BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC



G AGNES SCOTT COLLEGE



H BELMONT UNIVERSITY



I NORTHEASTERN STATE UNIVERSITY



J TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY



K SOUTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY



L MCLENNAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

ANSWERS: 1-D; 2-K; 3-F; 4-I; 5-L; 6-C; 7-A; 8-J; 9-D; 10-E; 11-B; 12-H



SPAM ON!

The canned meat treat is making a culinary comeback with some creative chefs. Here's one of the brand's SPAM-tastic recipes.

In the midst of all the sights and sounds of CMA Music Festival in Nashville stood a food truck that proved a smash hit with festival-goers. Boldly emblazoned on the side of the truck, in all capital letters, were the words SPAMAMERICAN! TOUR, signifying that this was no ordinary food vendor. Indeed, the truck was serving up free samples of delicacies made from one of the country's most iconic food brands, SPAM, including SPAM fries and coconut SPAM spears with pineapple chutney.

The canned meat treat is making a comeback of sorts, thanks in part to the company's fun-loving approach and the efforts of several

creative cooks. The SPAMAMERICAN! TOUR bus stopped in 12 different markets over the summer and featured a recipe made from SPAM, created by a local chef. For their Music City gig, the company partnered with Chef Hanna Lee from Soy Teriyaki Bistro in Nashville for an original dish called SPAM Rice Balls, a little twist on sushi.

"This is a whole new thing for the brand," Jennifer Nolander, product manager for Hormel Foods, told *Nash Country Weekly* as we sampled some goodies from the truck. "We have a loyal group that is so passionate about our brand, and we decided to celebrate that this year. We're also celebrating the restaurants that currently serve SPAM on their menu. It's becoming more popular all the time."

Check that out for yourself with this recipe for SPAM Rice Balls, which you can make in your own kitchen.

BOB PAXMAN

**Chef Hanna Lee
with her original
SPAM creation**



SPAM Rice Balls

1 cup diced SPAM®
2 cups cooked sushi-grade rice
1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
½ cup plus 2 tbsp. chopped parsley
½ cup shredded nori (thin black wrapping used in sushi)
½ cup nori powder
1 pound gochujang (Korean pepper paste)
1 tsp. cayenne pepper
1 tsp. garlic powder
1 tbsp. sesame seeds
1 tbsp. sesame oil
1 egg
Salt and pepper to season
2 cups panko bread crumbs
Spicy ranch dressing

HEAT frying oil to 360°.

In a large bowl, **ADD** all the ingredients (except bread crumbs, 2 tbsp. chopped parsley and ranch dressing) and mix them well.

Using your hands, **ROLL** into ½-inch rice balls.

In a large plate, **SPREAD** panko crumbs and 2 tbsp. of chopped parsley and mix them well.

Roll the rice balls into panko crumbs.

DEEP-FRY rice balls until golden brown.

Place them on paper towel-lined plate to cool.

Place the cooled rice balls on a plate and garnish with ranch dressing and nori powder.



Spam's Sir Can-a-Lot was a big hit with fans at CMA Music Festival.





Album

Luke Bryan

Kill the Lights

CAPITOL NASHVILLE

B

Luke has vowed to reach beyond the depths of bro-country drinking and sex romps to include more adult (meaning “grown-up”) material with this album. And on a few occasions, he does succeed, meaning that it is already superior to the mediocre *Crash My Party*. Not that he’s completely moved away from his bread-and-butter, though. In fact, the album kicks off with the cringe-inducing single “Kick the Dust Up,” which rattles off the standard country checklist of cornfields and *a jar full of clear* and contains these memorable lines: *Back it on up / Fill your cup up / Let’s tear it*

up up. The title track doesn’t waver much from that, but there’s an interesting funky guitar intro that digs back to the ’80s, inspired by Prince or possibly Queen.

The album is actually full of nice sonic touches, with liberal uses of organ and guitar that mesh well with the overall production (still, a lot of electronic hand claps and drum loops, but this is evidently the world we must now occupy and live with).

But now on to that adult material. “Fast” is easily the collection’s most universal cut, a clever reflection lamenting the quick passage of time. Luke is speaking like a real dad (which, of course, he is in real life), taking the point of view of someone who wants things to slow down a bit. “Way Way Back” tenderly depicts a couple trying to rekindle the sparks of their love

life. Even “Scarecrow” has a certain warmth to it, as a man remembers his country roots, knowing that they’ll always remain part of his makeup. If there’s a polarizing cut, it could come with “Home Alone Tonight,” a call-and-response duet between Luke and Little Big Town’s Karen Fairchild. The revenge motif (utilized with social media tools) might not sit well with everyone, though many may take it as simply a kiss-off tune.

Kill the Lights isn’t consistently pleasing, but it does represent a progression and evolution from Luke’s previous material.

LONG STORY SHORT: Luke’s die-hard fans will eat this up no questions asked, but he may also gain some new followers here.

BOB PAXMAN

THE NCW JUKEBOX

Essential songs from the artists featured in this issue

TOBY KEITH

"As Good As I Once Was"
"Should've Been a Cowboy"

KEITH URBAN

"John Cougar, John Deere,
John 3:16"
"Raise 'Em Up"

SCOTTY MCCREERY

"See You Tonight"

K.T. OSLIN

"80's Ladies"

SAM HUNT

"Leave the Night On"

TANYA TUCKER

"Two Sparrows in
a Hurricane"

LUKE BRYAN

"I See You"

ASHLEY MONROE

"On to Something Good"

TIM MCGRAW

"Shotgun Rider"
"Diamond Rings and
Old Barstools"

WILLIE NELSON

"On the Road Again"
"Blue Eyes Crying
in the Rain"



Singles

Kelsea Ballerini

"Dibs"

BLACK RIVER ENTERTAINMENT

B

Need more proof that Kelsea Ballerini is Taylor Swift's pop-country heir apparent? Her new single, "Dibs," has all the playful, sassy bite and melodic spark of early T. Swift compositions like "Should've Said No," except it's about starting a relationship rather than ending one. *Hey baby, what's your status? / And tell me, are you tryin' to keep it?* she asks amid shimmering acoustic guitar, mandolin and hand-clap percussion while positioning herself to be the next in line. The title sets up the post-chorus, a Kesha-like chant of what Kelsea is claiming as hers (lips, kiss, time, among other things). That same chant is repeated, double-time, over ringing chords as the song draws to a close, because why mess with a good thing? Tay-Tay wouldn't.

JON FREEMAN



Cole Swindell

"Let Me See Ya Girl"

WARNER BROS. NASHVILLE

B

There is just something inherently likeable about Cole Swindell, which makes you want to like all of the songs he releases. Fortunately, he's made that task pretty simple

with his newest earworm, "Let Me See Ya Girl." Sure, the production subscribes to the new Nashville formula of automated hand claps and "whoa-oh-ohs," but that explains a portion of the infectiousness—familiarity, y'all. There's an authenticity to Cole and his music. He doesn't say anything in a song that you can't imagine him saying in conversation. Even that *bring the beat back* sounds like genuine Cole, and it makes us smile. Every time.

TAMMY RAGUSA



David Nail

"Night's on Fire"

MCA NASHVILLE

C

David Nail is back on the airwaves with a new single, "Night's on Fire," the first offering from his as-of-yet-untitled fourth studio album. The new tune, written by Jonathan Singleton and Deric Ruttan, is the standard country ride down memory lane, back to those nostalgic teen years involving a girl, the back of a truck and a summer night. You can pretty much fill in the rest of the lyrics blindly, including whiskey lips, sunsets and stars. While David sounds as soulful as ever when he's not being buried in production—and perhaps the R&B peppering that is flavoring country music right now will bode well for him—"Night's on Fire" does little more than smolder.

JIM CASEY

A little off the TOP

SHANIA STARTED IT! I mean, if we're going to point fingers—and possibly find some belly button lint—it was Shania who started the craze in country music of young ladies baring their middles. You can call it a midriff, a belly shirt or a crop top, but what we're calling it is one of the hottest trends of the year. If you think a crop top is too revealing for you, check out modest versions on Danielle Bradbery and Jana Kramer, and take a look at *The Walking Dead* star Emily Kinney's ACC Awards dress, which just hints at skin. So belly up to the bar, y'all!



(Top, from left) The Band Perry's Kimberly Perry, Gloriana's Rachel Reinert, Cassadee Pope; (from far left) Mickey Guyton, Emily Kinney, Meghan Linsey, Jana Kramer and Danielle Bradbery

Meghan by Curtis Hilbun/APF; Kimberly by Gunta/Corbis; Jana by Kevin Winter/Getty Images; Cassadee by Christopher Polk/Getty Images; Mickey by Larry Busacca/Getty Images; Rachel and Emily by Achillea/Corbis; Danielle by Jason Mientz/Getty Images

Luke Bryan

Farm Tour 2015

SEPT. 30

Fort Wayne, Ind.
M&J Farms

OCT. 1

Lexington, Ky.
Talon Farm & Winery

OCT. 2

Knoxville, Tenn.
Maple Lane Farms

OCT. 3

Columbia, S.C.
Culler Farms

OCT. 7

Starkville, Miss.
Holtzcamp Farms

OCT. 8

Tuscaloosa, Ala.
Twin Creeks Farm

OCT. 9

Macon, Ga.
Midway at Central City Park

OCT. 10

Valdosta, Ga.
MJ Taylor Farms



Tanya Tucker

Tour 2015

AUG. 5

East Sturgis, S.D.
Full Throttle Saloon

AUG. 14

Havelock, Ontario
26th Annual Havelock Country Jamboree

AUG. 16

Erie, Pa.
Celebrate Erie

AUG. 29

Baraboo, Wis.
Ho-Chunk Gaming Wis. Dells

SEPT. 11

Warroad, Minn.
Seven Clans Casino

SEPT. 12

Flandreau, S.D.
Royal River Casino

SEPT. 13

Macomb, Ill.
Texas Tranzplants

OCT. 10

Russellville, Ark.
Center for the Arts

OCT. 11

Branson, Mo.
Andy Williams Moon River Theatre

OCT. 24

Renfro Valley, Ky.
New Barn

OCT. 30

Eau Claire, Wis.
State Theatre

OCT. 31

Carmel, Ind.
The Palladium

5 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT RANDY HOUSER

With his career really taking flight, Randy Houser is pretty much constantly on the go these days. Appropriately, he has released a new single called "WE WENT" from a forthcoming album. We checked in with the Mississippi native to dig up some little known facts.

- 1** He takes his Jeep Wrangler everywhere with him.
- 2** The first concert he went to was Foreigner when he was 8 years old.
- 3** His core band has been with him since his co-headlining tour with Jamey Johnson in 2009.
- 4** His first trip to New York City was with Dallas Davidson, Luke Bryan and American Young's Jon Stone. They drove through the night from Nashville because none of them had been to New York.
- 5** He moved to Nashville from Lake, Miss., 13 years ago. In the last two years he has had three singles go to No. 1, selling more than 4 million digital downloads.

NASH NEXT

NEW ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

It took a mirror
for CHASE RICE
to see his true
character.

CLEAR REFLECTIONS

STORY BY TRICIA DESPRES



Chase Rice is a man of many layers, some that he's just now beginning to pull back . . . nearly seven years after the untimely death of his father.

"Just two days ago, I went home to help my mom move out," recalls Chase of his recent trip back to his home state of North Carolina. "It was 20 minutes before we left and I was just finishing cleaning out [Dad's] drawers, and I looked up and looked into his mirror and saw a smirk on my face. I knew it was the last time I would ever look in that mirror, and it was like my father was looking back at me with a smirk that reminded me to be proud of myself after a few years when I have been so hard on myself."

And for the record, Chase has much to be proud of.

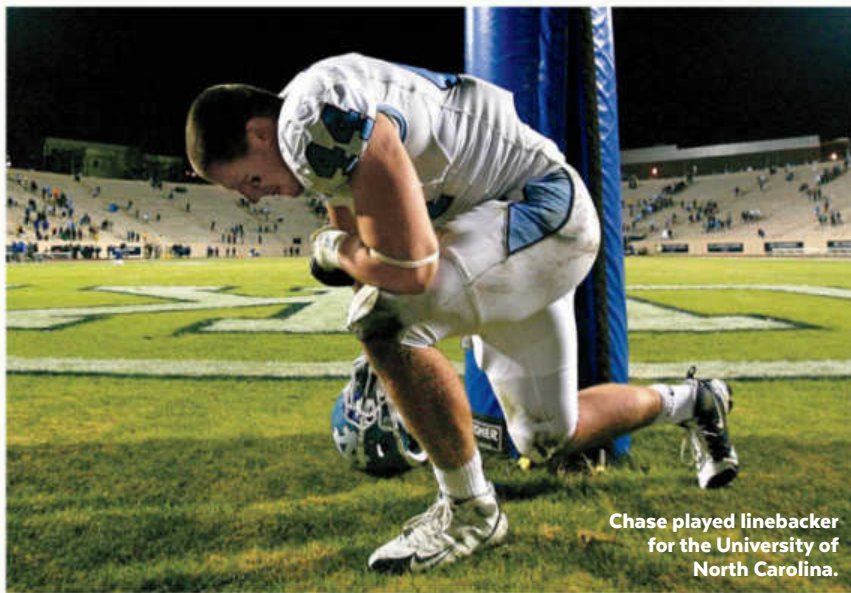
Coming from virtual obscurity to co-writing one of country music's biggest songs—Florida Georgia Line's "Cruise"—to creating a budding career on the strength of his current record, *Ignite the Night*, the former college football player has established himself as someone who is in a constant state of reinvention, especially within the last six months.

"My personal life has changed," he says. "I have calmed down with the partying, which allows me to focus more on the music and the art behind it. I have changed so much about how I'm living. I've straightened up."

Some things haven't changed, though: Chase Rice isn't



From the Grand Ole Opry (above) to the college gridiron (above right) to a NASCAR pit crew (right), Chase Rice is ready for any stage.



Chase played linebacker for the University of North Carolina.

one to mince words. "I'm tired of the same old sh*t," he says from his tour bus on a sunny Friday morning. "I'm just so sick and tired of the same old songs. I'm tired of singing about that stuff. I have this feeling that people are longing for something deeper."

And he's ready to give it to them.

While Chase will forever be tied to the song that seemingly put bro-country on the map, he is increasingly showing off his growth as the singer/songwriter who first began playing in clubs for sometimes no more than 20 people. When his EP *Ready Set Roll* was propelled to the top of the iTunes country chart back in 2013 based solely on fan momentum,

the country music industry took notice.

They will likely do it again, because Chase says he refuses to fall into some sort of media-generated stereotype.

"The next record won't be the same old sh*t," continues Chase, who is currently out on the road with Kenny Chesney as part of the Big Revival Tour. "I would love to write more personally on the next record. I hear the same old negative comments about bro-country and about country music being all about girls, trucks and tailgates, but I have much more to say than songs about that."

But before he is ready to move on to a new album, Chase is basking in the success of his current record, which



(Above) Chase (left) and Florida Georgia Line's Brian Kelley accept a gold record for FGL's "Cruise," which Chase helped write; (below) "Cruise" songwriters (from left) Jesse Rice, FGL's Tyler Hubbard and Brian Kelley, Joey Moi and Chase are numero uno.



debuted in 2014 at No. 1 on the *Billboard* Top Country Albums chart and No. 3 on the all-genre *Billboard* 200 chart.

Chase now finds himself basking in the ability to call the shots on what comes next. Because while Chase's current single, "Gonna Wanna Tonight," is making its way up the charts, his fans are also sweating over the album's ultra-provocative bonus track, "Ride," featuring Macy Maloy.

"The video we were going to put out for 'Ride' was the perfect example of the old me," he says. "The video that we ended up with is Chase Rice 2.0. At first, we had this *50 Shades of Grey* kind of treatment, but in light of my life changes, we said screw that. We didn't want to give people what they expect-

ed. We wanted to take it in a whole different direction, which is why it resembles this action-packed movie where the guy heads home to his wife and they live happily ever after."

Yet the song that just might finally give us all the clearest look into who Chase Rice truly is could be just around the corner. "One night I was listening to Eric Church and listening to how real he was in his songs. I mean, he writes so passionately, and I thought, 'What do I have out there that's like that?'"

Enter "Carolina Can."

"It's definitely one of my favorite songs on the set list and it blew me away the reaction the fans had to that song, maybe because it wasn't the same old sh*t," he says of the

5 THINGS CHASE RICE ALWAYS TAKES ON THE ROAD

DAD'S DOG TAGS:

I wear those every day.

JOURNAL:

This is my 10th paper journal. Those journals hold 15 years of my life.

BLACK HAT:

It's the one I always wear backwards onstage.

JACK DANIEL'S:

It sounds so clichéd, but we just have to have Jack Daniel's on the bus.

SIG SAUER MK25

HANDGUN:

I like to stop at gun ranges while I am out on the road.



"I HAVE THIS
FEELING THAT
PEOPLE ARE
LONGING FOR
SOMETHING
DEEPER."

Chase proves he is
ready for the lime-
light at one of his
shows in 2015.

song he penned with songwriter Scooter Carusoe. "I wanted to write from a very personal viewpoint so I could start sharing my life and my story."

Chase says he plans to share more of that very personal story in his next record, which probably won't come out until next summer. And that's OK, because Chase says he is in no rush.

"I was up at 5:06 this morning," he says. "I had a dream about this song, and in the dream I was talking to this artist and asking how they wrote this song and I woke up and realized that I had actually written the song in the dream, so there I was, quickly putting the melody in my phone at five o'clock in the morning."

It's yet another example of Chase Rice 2.0.

"Things have been insane for me lately," he explains. "I never write when I am touring, but this time around, I have literally been flying back home because I just have so many ideas in my head and thoughts that I want to go capture while they were hot in my head. I will say this: it's some of the greatest work I have ever done."

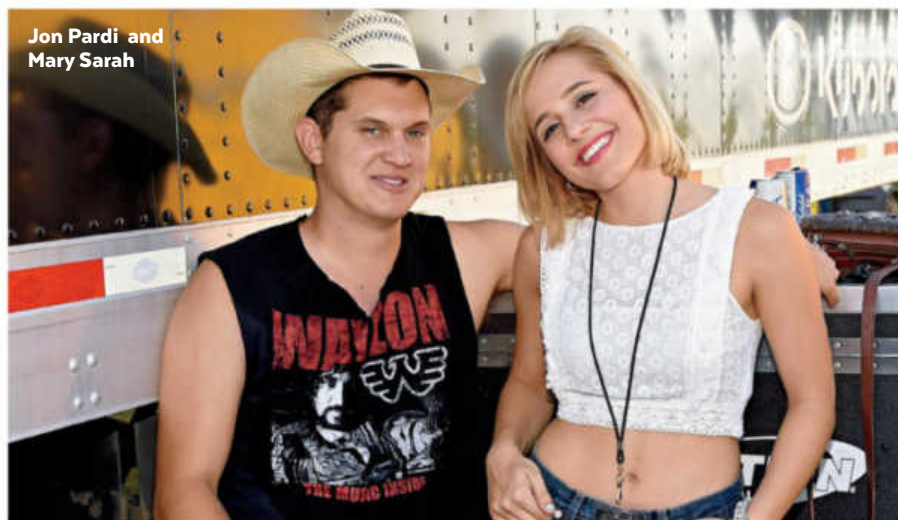
Songs we bet Chase's father would love.

"I still think my dad would be a little pissed at me for not keeping that job at Hendrick Motorsports." The former NASCAR pit crewman laughs and adds, "But the funny thing is that I have never felt like he hasn't seen what I am up to. It feels like he's walking right here beside me." ■

Alan
Jackson

ROCK THE SOUTH

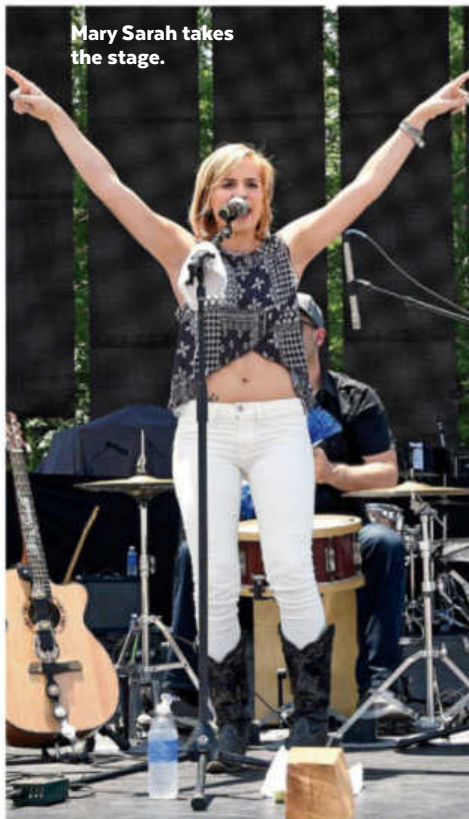
Stifling heat didn't keep the crowds away from the fourth Rock the South festival, held June 14-15 in Cullman, Ala., and benefiting a series of local charities. Friday night focused on young stars like **BRANTLEY GILBERT** and **TYLER FARR**, while Saturday brought out veterans **SARA EVANS**, **TRAVIS TRITT** and **ALAN JACKSON**.



Jon Pardi and
Mary Sarah



Eric
Paslay



Mary Sarah takes the stage.

Brantley Gilbert (below) and Tyler Farr (right) closed out night one of Rock the South with high-energy sets.



Crowds baked in the sun for the all-day-long shows.



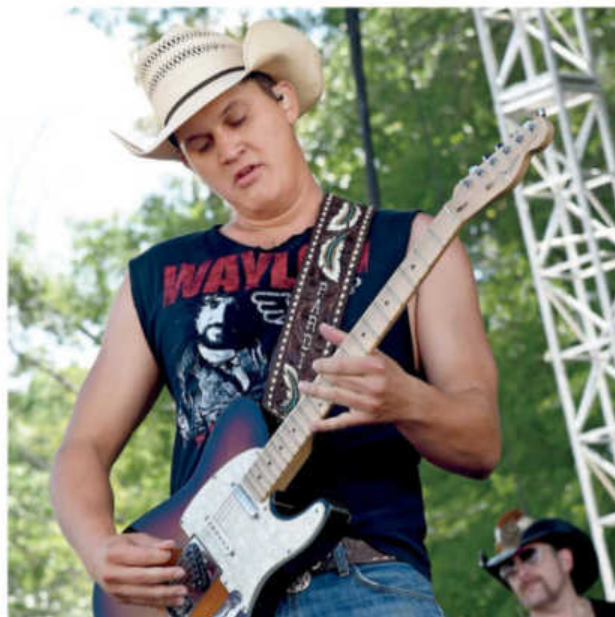
Blackberry Smoke



Sara Evans and her husband, Jay Barker, helped organize Rock the South, which this year featured a diverse lineup of artists.



Travis Tritt



Brantley gets the fans worked up.



(Above, from left) Blackberry Smoke's Richard Turner, retired Capt. Chad Fleming, Rock the South's Sarah Neill, Blackberry Smoke's Brit Turner, Rock the South's Taylor Elliott, Colston Galloway, Rock the South's Kara Leonard and *Dancing With the Stars* contestant Noah Galloway make s'mores; (left) Andrew Leahey & the Homestead.



Big Smo



Singer/songwriter
Corey Smith



When fans weren't pressing forward to get a closer look of their favorite performer at Rock the South, they had a pool and numerous snacking/dining options to check out.





UP WHERE THEY BELONG

SCOTTY McCREERY, HUNTER HAYES and other stars share their talents with a special group of people at **ACM LIFTING LIVES MUSIC CAMP**.

BY BOB PAXMAN

MUSIC HAS THE POWER to relieve, unite and, most of all, enrich. Never is this wielded more mightily or certainly more tangibly than an annual week in Nashville organized by the Academy of Country Music. It's known as the ACM Lifting Lives Music Camp, a residential program open to those with Williams syndrome, a genetic condition that currently has no cure.

Williams syndrome is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by certain facial features, such as

widely spaced teeth and a flattened nasal bridge. What is at the same time immensely fascinating is the heightened intellectual awareness of those who exhibit the syndrome. They are highly sociable people with striking verbal abilities relative to their overall IQ. They also show an extraordinary affinity for music—which is where the ACM comes in.

The organization rounds up the support of the country music community each year for the Lifting Lives Music Camp. Artists, songwriters,

producers and other industry professionals give their time to make the week-long program an enriching one for the campers who attend.

During the most recent Music Camp this past June, Hunter Hayes, Scotty McCreery, JT Hodges, The Swon Brothers, top record producer Ross Copperman and songwriter Heather Morgan helped the campers in a variety of activities. Ross and Heather participated in writing an original song with the campers, JT hosted an afternoon at the famous



(Far left) A cheerful group photo at the Wildhorse Saloon; (left) Campers had the chance to visit with JT Hodges at the Wildhorse Saloon; (below) Scotty McCreery performs and greets a group of happy campers at the legendary Bluebird Cafe.



Wildhorse Saloon while The Swon Brothers led an evening of karaoke onstage at Winner's Bar. Scotty took part in a performance/Q&A session at the Bluebird Cafe.

The Swon Brothers, Zach and Colton, participated in ACM Lifting Lives in 2014 and couldn't wait to return this year. The siblings enjoyed every minute of their karaoke session with the campers, who performed everything from ABBA's "Dancing Queen" to Dolly Parton's timeless "I Will Always Love You"

to near perfection.

"After last year, how could you not want to be involved again and continue the relationship?" said Colton.

Hunter Hayes kept the campers smiling with two separate projects for Lifting Lives. Hunter recorded the original song the campers wrote with Ross and Heather, "Wherever You Go," at Ocean Way Nashville Recording Studios, located on Nashville's historic Music Row. On the final night of the program, Hunter and the campers performed "Wherever You Go" on the

stage of the Grand Ole Opry.

"I loved the song that they wrote and the passion behind it," Hunter commented after recording the tune. "You can tell that they absolutely love music."

And playing off that love, the ACM does its best to create intimate musical experiences for the campers. And it didn't get much more up close and personal than the Bluebird show with Scotty McCreery. The campers were seated at the Bluebird tables positioned near the stage, as if they



(Clockwise from above) Ross Copperman conducts the group in their original song; The Swon Brothers pose with the campers and encourage a karaoke performer at Winner's Bar; Heather Morgan and Ross Copperman lead everyone in a singalong; Hunter Hayes runs through the original tune that the campers wrote.



ACM LIFTING LIVES CONTINUED

were watching one of the venue's regular evening performances.

Excitement was high as Scotty bounded to the stage and lit into his single "Water Tower Town," and was met with shouts of "Scotty!" as he finished. He followed with his recent big hit "See You Tonight," then took a request from one of the campers, who asked for a rendition of Conway Twitty's classic "Hello Darlin'."

As the band cranked up for the next tune, Scotty shouted, "Are you all feelin' it today?" At that, Scotty had the audience rocking with "Fee-lin' It," breaking into a wide grin

when the campers chimed in on the "Whoa, Whoa" portion of the chorus.

The afternoon quickly turned into a gleeful "singalong with Scotty" day once Scotty threw out the question, "Can we sing a song together?" The campers voted for "Amazing Grace" and Garth Brooks' "The River" for their sing-alongs, with Scotty leading the way.

During the performance, campers were given the chance to ask Scotty a few questions. One camper asked Scotty to recount his biggest career moment, outside of winning *American Idol* in 2011. "I'd say it's meeting the folks that were big for me grow-

ing up, like George Strait and Garth Brooks," Scotty answered.

"Today was really fun," Scotty remarked with a smile after wrapping up his set. "I had worked with ACM Lifting Lives before, but I had never performed for them. They were really into it. And the campers asked some really intelligent questions, not just about *American Idol*. They want to know all about the business."

Scotty likely summed up the feeling of his fellow artists as he observed the enthusiastic smiles on all the happy campers. "This is the best crowd you'll see all year," he said. "No doubt about it." **NCW**

"Making Merry Mischief"

Illuminated Holiday Garland Collection

Impressively sized
at 4 Feet Wide!

It
Lights
Up!



Set Three
"Hanging on to the
Holiday Spirit"

Set Four
"Frollicking Felines"
Set Two
"Glistening Garland"

50 glowing white lights capture
holiday enchantment *

Features adorable, fully sculpted
and hand-painted kittens *

Luxurious garland is dusted
with shimmering snow



Watch your
holiday garland
collection grow
with each set,
beginning with
Tabby Tidings,
Set One

Set Seven
"Boughs of Fun"

Set Six
"Every Kitten
Is a Gift"

Set Five
"Dressed in Their
Holiday Best"

Set One
"Tabby Tidings"

Shine new light on the cutest Christmas capers

There's something about Christmas that brings out the merriest—and mischievous—side of kittens. The lights! The ribbons! The ornaments! It's a *paus-itively* irresistible recipe for feline fun, as these bundles of fur get caught up in the spirit—and boughs of evergreens!

Now, the hilarious hijinks of kittens join with holiday traditions in an impressively-sized Christmas treasure. Beginning with the Premiere Issue, "Tabby Tidings," the "Making Merry Mischief" Illuminated Garland Collection is comprised of a realistic-looking 4-foot wide pine bough that holds kitten sculptures and holiday accents.

Arriving in consecutive sets that together create the finished display, every detail is meticulously hand-crafted. Each kitten is engaged in holiday fun, finding their furry paws and wispy whiskers tangled in richly-textured branches. Naturalistic holly

berries and "snow"-tipped pine cones enhance the greenery, while wrapped gifts and colorful ribbons add holiday cheer. As a finishing touch, 20 shatter-proof (and kitten proof!) ornaments decorate the display.

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SHOF perf by Shannon Stapleton/Corbis, retro perf courtesy Toby Keith

BIG IDEAS

TOBY KEITH'S
HARD WORK
PAYS OFF WITH HIS
DREAM-COME-TRUE
INDUCTION INTO THE
SONGWRITERS
HALL OF FAME.

STORY BY ANNIE REUTER

IN TOBY KEITH'S MIDTEENS he wrote one of his first songs, a track called "South Texas Vacation," which he'd go on to demo in Oklahoma City with his bar band and again with session musicians when he was told he needed a better demo.

The 54-year-old and newly inducted Songwriters Hall of Fame member recalls those early recordings to *Nash Country Weekly* with a smile on a warm summer Friday. We're on his tour bus parked backstage at Xfinity Theatre in Hartford, Conn., for his Good Times & Pick Up Lines Tour on July 10, where he waxes nostalgic on his early days and shares several tips on songwriting just an hour before he takes the stage.

"Though I thought the first ones were better, the second was kind of slick," Toby recalls of his first time recording in the studio, his big blue eyes

looking off into the distance. "We got demos good enough to pass around and let people hear. I got signed to an independent label in Texas and they put a couple songs out and tried to get them charted; never did work, so I broke away from that."

Years later, he'd sign to Mercury Records, the label that put out his self-titled debut album. He would then go on to start his own label, Show Dog, and later this year he's expected to release his 18th studio album. As much success as Toby has had over the years, amassing 20 *Billboard* No. 1 singles—not to mention a bundle of CMA, ACM and American Music Awards—he says it is his recent induction into the Songwriters Hall of Fame that he's most proud of.

"Your peers vote you in," Toby explains while relaxing on a leather couch at the front of the bus in white pants, a black button-down



A younger
Toby tries
out a tune.



(Clockwise from above) Toby at one of his earliest gigs; with some momentum in 1994; his self-titled 1993 debut album; accepting an honor at the 35th annual CMA Awards in 2001



TOBY KEITH CONTINUED

with the sleeves rolled up and his signature tan cowboy hat. “Songwriters vote you in, so it makes it even that more important that New York accepted a hillbilly.”

He also says it’s the only award he has ever wanted.

“You just hope that they come along while you’re alive,” he says, noting that other inductees, like blues legend Willie Dixon, have received the award posthumously. “If I never got a recording deal I would have still written songs and I would have still worked as hard as I have worked. I just happened to be an artist, too. So to get that far along and get into that Hall of Fame, that’s an all-genre Hall of Fame. You’re accepted by all genres of music. That was the ultimate.”

During Toby’s first 20 years in

the business he released an album every year, the majority of which he wrote himself. The only way he says he could accomplish releasing this much music was by writing every day, something he continues to do while on tour. This morning he wrote with songwriter Bobby Pinson, who is also on the bus.

“We’re always writing. Sometimes we write one that gets on the album and sometimes we write one that ends up in the trash,” Toby says. “Most of the time we’re pretty productive.”

He and Bobby then recall a song they wrote together years ago at this very spot on the bus. It was Toby’s 2008 No. 1 hit, “She Never Cried in Front of Me,” and it comes up in conversation when Toby explains that the beauty of having a license to write songs is that you can take a song in

any direction you choose as a writer.

“You can let your mind wander and you can take it in whatever direction you want to and you can take it as far into that direction as you want,” he explains. “It’s really neat to expand your mind and push out and create things. Guys will say stuff in love songs that they’ll never say to a woman. I think that they’re just too . . . they got their dukes up all the time. They’re trying to be alpha male.”

While Toby says some guys may talk like a character in a country song, he and Bobby don’t keep those types of men in their circle. He adds that he only talks about girls this way in songs. He admits, though, that even when writing with a close friend and frequent collaborator like Bobby, it can get awkward trading

retro perf courtesy Toby Keith; CMA Award by Tamara Arroyo/AF; retro Toby courtesy Polygram Records; BHI Award by Rick Diamond/Getty Images; Steve & Day by Ben Hoser/NSA; Show Dog announcement by Lala Grossman; SMO Award by Gary Geshell/Getty Images



(Clockwise from above) Toby at the launch of his label, Show Dog Records, in 2005; the *Big Dog Daddy* album; receiving the Songwriter/Artist of the Decade award from at the NSAI Awards in 2009; Toby and Bobby Pinson accept honors from BMI.



romantic lines with each other to use in the song.

"One night we're sitting here writing and we were so hooked into this song. The windows were up, didn't have any lights on and the sun's coming up and we were so dialed into the song," Keith recalls of writing "She Never Cried in Front of Me." "It was wintertime and it was about 5 o'clock. The sun was up and we both had guitars sitting here and neither one of us got up and turned any lights on. The sun went down and it got dark and we just stayed focused and dialed in. I laid some line out there about 'sweaty sheet rolling down your back' or something and he goes, 'Hey, you either gotta turn some lights on or light a candle.'"

They both laugh heartily. Bobby

adds, "He was throwing lines out like 'drawing lines across my skin,' and I was like, 'Hey, now!'"

Bobby and Toby have been writing together for years and share a writing credit on Toby's new single, "35 MPH Town." Inspired by the changes going on in the world, and not often for the better, the song came together based upon a saying Toby says he has heard thousands of times in conversation: "Man, I would have been here 30 minutes ago but I had to stop and go through that 35-mile-per-hour town."

"I can't tell you the last time I saw kids out in the front yard playing shirts and skins football. I can't tell you. [Now] it's all video games." He pauses, reflecting on his own childhood spent in the great outdoors. "That's the way we

TOBY'S BEST SONGWRITING ADVICE: GO BACK TO THE WOODSHED

"The first time I came to Nashville and they listened to my demo they told me to go back to the woodshed," Toby recalls. "It drove me so hard that I never did quit for the next 20 years."

The demo he passed around Music City in 1990 had what would become five Top 5 songs on it, including "He Ain't Worth Missing," "Wish I Didn't Know Now" and his first single, the No. 1 "Should've Been a Cowboy." It was this initial rejection that kept Toby determined and, more importantly, writing. He moved back home to Oklahoma, but a year and a half later he signed a record deal.

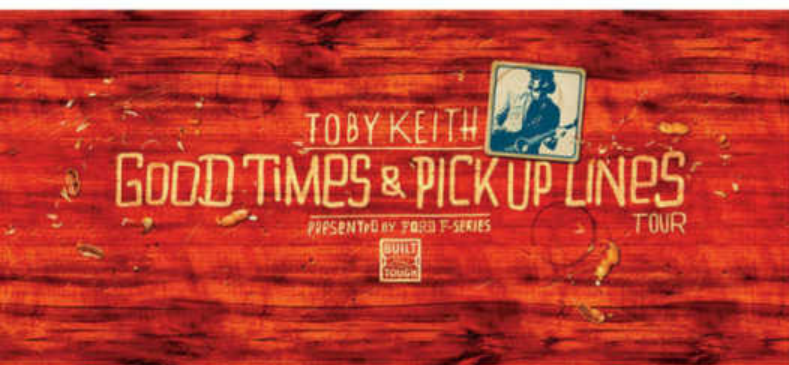
"All it did was make me go back and start piling more songs up. So, when I came in next time, not only would it prove them wrong, I hadn't gotten lackadaisical," he says with distinct fire in his voice. "I didn't have a co-write on my first two albums. It's hard being a songwriter and being that quality and being an artist, too. We never took a year off either. That's how you pile those numbers."

So how'd he keep going with album pressures, touring 170-plus shows a year and writing all his own songs?

"I'm tough. I'm a tough bastard," he says, laughing. "I just mowed up and got it done. Learn from your mistakes and be productive every day. Get up and make sure that no one—they can outsing you, they can outwrite you, they can outpromote you—but they can't outwork you. That was my goal. My work ethic was second to none. Nobody can outwork me."



(Left) Toby celebrates his Songwriters Hall of Fame induction in New York with television host/comedian Stephen Colbert; (below, from left) Jimmy Buffett, George Strait and Toby at the 2004 BMI Country Awards.



TOBY KEITH CONTINUED

lived our every day. I sound like my dad now.”

While sitting and talking about songwriting with Toby, it is clear he is very serious about the craft. His humor and playfulness come out, too. His current tour is named Good Times & Pick Up Lines, and at the start of the show a number is displayed on the stage and fans are asked to text their best pickup lines to be shown.

It's hard to imagine that Toby Keith hasn't written his own song complete with pickup lines yet, but as this is pointed out you can practically see the wheels turning in his head for

his next co-write with Bobby.


“I write even when I'm not writing. Does that make sense?” he asks. “Writers tend to stand around all the time and absorb and it's really crazy to think how much we think we're absorbing and how much you really miss because you can't multitask. You think, ‘Man, I'm sitting around here looking for a great idea,’ and you listen to everything everybody said, and then someone will throw something on you that they've written and you're like, ‘That's been around forever, I just didn't see it when it went by!’”

As a man with 20 No. 1 songs to his name, Toby clearly knows what he's

doing. Much of this has to do with the fact that he writes every single day and has a keen understanding of what his fans want to hear.

“When I put songs on albums, I don't put stuff on there that I don't think people would listen to,” he explains. “If I write 50 songs this year and we cut 12 of them, those 12 are the best of the 50 and they're all like little children to me. Each one of them, in my mind, I know why they're written and I know what the thought is and what you're trying to express.”

“When you're coming through there and you've got ‘I Love This Bar,’ ‘Beer for My Horses,’ ‘As Good as I Once Was,’ ‘American Soldier,’

A photograph of Toby Keith performing on stage. He is wearing a black cowboy hat, a dark suit jacket over a white shirt and a red patterned tie. He is playing a sunburst acoustic guitar and singing into a microphone. The background is dark with blue and purple stage lights and some smoke or fog. A bright circular light is visible in the upper left corner.

Toby performs at the
Songwriters Hall of
Fame induction.

**“IF I WRITE
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AND WE CUT
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TO ME.”**

songs like that just bang, bang, bang in a row, I’m wanting them all to do good and I think they’re all going to do good,” he continues. “I really don’t have one off the top of my head that I thought, ‘Wow, how is that a hit?’ I’ve had some that I [thought] were going to be a hit that weren’t.”

Toby’s 18th studio album is expected this October. Bobby Pinson is among the album’s co-writers and there is at least one guest feature from the “Margaritaville” man (and major inspiration to Toby), Jimmy Buffett.

“There’s not [one] songwriter in our business that hasn’t been inspired by him,” he says. “He hasn’t had a hit on the radio in decades, but he still sells

sold-out shows. He’s got his own world. He’s living inside his own world. Nobody else has that in that magnitude.”

Toby is living in his own world, too, but he’s all set as far as awards go for the time being.

“I don’t care if I never get anything else. I got the one I want,” he says about the Songwriters Hall of Fame honor. “That’s the only one I wanted.”

He pauses as he takes it all in one more time.

“Like I said, this came backwards. I thought the other stuff in my own industry would come first and then my kids would get this one. This one came and this is mine. This is the only one I’ll present in my house. I’m going to

sleep with it. I’m going to put it in the middle.” He laughs. “This songwriter thing really humbled me and set me back to make me go, ‘Thank you.’ For the first time in my life I really got something I appreciated in the music industry. It’s that important to me.”

With his honor from the Songwriters Hall of Fame, Toby has now been accepted into a world along with his songwriting heroes, and this fact is not lost on him.

“I’m sitting on the bus three nights ago with Kris Kristofferson, Willie Nelson and me. We needed one more Hall of Famer to have Mount Rushmore,” he says with a big grin. “That’s a pretty good feeling.” **NCW**

A full-page photograph of Keith Urban performing on stage. He is wearing a black t-shirt with a graphic of a person playing a guitar, black pants, and has a large tattoo on his right arm. He is holding a Fender bass guitar and singing into a microphone. The background is a solid blue color.

BASS PRO

KEITH URBAN IS
ALL ABOUT THAT
BASS ON NEW HIT
"JOHN COUGAR,
JOHN DEERE,
JOHN 3:16,"
THE FASTEST-
SELLING SINGLE
OF HIS CAREER.

WORKING IN BLACKBIRD STUDIO with longtime producer Dann Huff (Faith Hill, Rascal Flatts), Keith Urban was struggling with how to arrange “John Cougar, John Deere, John 3:16,” written by hit tunesmiths Shane McAnally, Ross Copperman and Josh Osborne.

“I was originally going to track it with a drum loop and an acoustic guitar because that’s traditionally what I would do,” says the Aussie singer/songwriter on the phone from his home in Nashville, where, between tour stops, he is working on songs for the follow-up to his 2013 album, *Fuse*.

For whatever reason, the song wasn’t coming together. “I just wasn’t inspired,” Keith says. “I’ve become more and more willing to listen to my instincts in the studio and not question anything. So if I find something inside me saying, ‘This isn’t it,’ then I always listen to that.”

Frustrated, he took a look around and spied the song’s salvation.

“The great thing about Blackbird Studios is that [owner] John McBride has instruments hanging on the wall,” Keith says. “You never know what’s going to be there, and there just happened to be a bass guitar hanging behind me. I grabbed the bass guitar down and I started playing that line and the whole song came to life. I recorded a crude bass part and then we were going to get a session player to come in and play it *properly*, since I’m not a bass player. But, as we lived with it, more and more it was part of the song. And because I sang and played at the same time, it just had a particular thing we really didn’t want to replace, so it stayed that way.”

He enjoyed laying down the funky groove for “John Cougar” so much that when it came time to play it live at the CMT Music Awards in June, Keith decided to stick with the four-string for the performance.

The steady-rolling jam, which has become the fastest-selling single of his career, piqued his interest from the moment he saw the title and, Keith says, he wondered how that phrase could possibly be sung.

“I certainly didn’t expect it to be rhythmic like it was. I love the imagery of the lyrics. It’s almost, really, like a painting in a lot of ways for me, a broad-stroke painting,” he says of the song’s shout-outs to everyone from John Wayne to Don McLean to Mark Twain. “You can fill in all the specifics, but in some ways it’s a bit of a Southern American tour de force. For me, it was love at first listen. It just resonated so deeply.”

Keith says he has yet to hear from John Mellencamp about the use of his former stage name in the

Normally content with his trusty six string, Keith picked up a bass guitar for “John Cougar, John Deere, John 3:16.”



title. “He probably feels good [about it] in the context of it, I think,” says Keith, noting the heartland rocker’s influence on him, particularly his seminal ’80s albums *Scarecrow* and *The Lonesome Jubilee*, between which he transitioned from Cougar

to Mellencamp. “With all of those other references [to] growing up, it would be right to say John Cougar,” says Keith, adding with a laugh, “And anyway, there’s too many syllables in Mellencamp.”

Co-writer Shane McAnally agrees about the name, and not only about its length from a rhyming standpoint.

“One of the reasons of just saying John Cougar is it also represents a different part of his career when he was going through his own struggle and had reservations about that name,” says Shane, noting it helps pinpoint the song’s nostalgia for a specific time before the singer/songwriter made his transition. And on a deeper level it represents the idea of transition itself, a coming-of-age concept inherent in the lyrics, which resonated for the writers, and Keith as well.

“It wasn’t something we mulled over, it just felt so right,” Shane says, then adds with a laugh, “And I also had this part of me that just loved that it was an animal and so is John Deere.”

The *American Idol* judge got the thrill of his life when he played with Mellencamp at NBC-TV’s Red Nose Day fundraiser in May.

“That was the first time I had ever been onstage with him, and it was surreal for me,” says Keith. “To be playing his songs in my cover bands for so many years and suddenly I’m standing onstage singing ‘Pink Houses’ with him. It was just amazing.”

SARAH RODMAN





BACK IN THE GAME

K.T. OSLIN RETURNS TO ACTION WITH HER FIRST ALBUM IN NEARLY 15 YEARS.

STORY BY BOB PAXMAN

K.T. OSLIN IS IN THE MIDDLE OF

a conversation when she feels the need to pause for a brief moment. She flashes that familiar wry, sardonic smile, foreshadowing that a wonderful touch of wit is about to drop from her ever-engaging mind.

"I'm sorry I've come looking like I'm going to pick weeds," she says with a laugh, emphasizing that vital last word. Not that we interpreted her outfit that way, of course. Yes, she's arrived sporting a sun hat and casual top and pants, but that's fairly well the norm in this dress-for-comfort age. Such informality, however, would likely have drawn head shakes, sighs and other more audible utterings back when K.T. signed her major-label record deal in 1987.

"Before, I would have never come to an interview like that," K.T. says. "I would have made sure to be all dolled up. The label insisted on it. But it's a different game now."

K.T. actually favors the term "game" when talking about her music career, which began nearly 30 years ago, spurred on by the anthem-like single "80's Ladies." The "game" she's referring to involves the business itself, as well as the protocol and politics one must follow to stay alive in it. And yes, the game was a different one three decades ago.

Take K.T.'s story, even now one of the more interesting and tradition-defying in country music lore. When she hooked on with RCA in 1987, K.T. wasn't your typical 20-year-old newcomer—or your typical 30-year-old for that matter. No, K.T. had reached the age of 46, a figure that sounds unfathomable in today's context. She was a fully mature adult who had grown-up things to write and sing about. To say that the label went out on a limb is an understatement in its purest form.

"I went in there and I wasn't this young little babe singing songs about boys," K.T. says. "I had something different to say, and



K.T. needed two hands to hold her Grammy awards in 1989; (below) Her iconic 80's Ladies album, which hit No. 1 in 1988.



maybe it wouldn't have fit radio's needs. But it worked. Luckily, I found enough listeners who allowed me to stay in the game."

Those listeners came mainly in the form of fellow adult females, who found a voice that directly addressed their lives. K.T.'s sharply written commentary "80's Ladies," centering on the dreams and de-

spairs of a generation of women, helped signal her arrival. "It was a very human song," K.T. points out. "You know, we marry, we divorce, we have children and find success, all that stuff. I always thought it was a song that could fight with the big boys." Indeed, "80's Ladies" found an audience, peaking at No. 7 in 1987 and eventually copping the Grammy award for Song of the Year.

Follow-up singles "Do Ya" and "I'll Always Come Back" became No. 1 country hits, propelling K.T. to the 1988 Country Music Association award for Female Vocalist of the Year. She scored two more chart-toppers, "Hold Me" and "Come Next Monday," before her chart success began to wane in the early part of the 2000s. After a series of health setbacks, including coronary bypass surgery in 1995, K.T. recorded her final album for RCA, *Live Close By, Visit Often*, in 2001.

Fans have heard little from K.T. in the interim, until just recently. K.T. has released a new album, titled *Simply*, on the independent Red River label, her first collection since that 2001 effort. *Simply* features rerecorded versions of "80's Ladies," "Hold Me," "Younger Men" and others, along with a new selection, "Do You Think About Me," which K.T. wrote with acclaimed songwriter Al Anderson.

The new tune marks her first writing effort in several years. "Al kind of took me out of the bog," she cracks. "It took a while to write it, but I love to write with him." For the recording of the album, K.T. went the way of many of her peers, eschewing the large studio for a more intimate setting.

"We were in the bass player's basement," she explains with a laugh. "You can do all this now because of technology. Talk about something that's changed. I mean, you can record an album in your purse now, right? You know, 'Here, just sing into this.' But it was amazing. We did it in three days.

K.T. OSLIN CONTINUED

We were prepared and we knew what we were going to do, and I think that helped.”

K.T.’s vision was to rework some of her classics in a more stripped-down manner, giving way to the title. Hits like “80’s Ladies” in particular were known for their pop productions, which afforded her a wider, across-the-board appeal. “But twenty or twenty-five years later, I wanted to change some things,” K.T. says. “I wanted to do them differently. And why not? I don’t have to answer to anybody.”

In a surprising admission, K.T. reveals that she wasn’t always pleased with the original arrangements. “The way we do ‘80’s Ladies’ for this album is just piano and my vocal,” she explains. “And it is beautiful. You don’t have all the clutter of instruments and this swirling anthem sound. It was getting to where I didn’t enjoy singing it because it wasn’t where I wanted it. But it’s very poignant this way and it doesn’t sound dated.”

The result lives up to the title, as she views it. “We didn’t overthink it or analyze it too much,” K.T. notes with a satisfied smile. “I think the album is relaxing as much as it is so simple. It’s like, sit back and cool your jets for a minute and give yourself time to listen.”

Along with the new album, K.T. has also resurrected another aspect of her career that went missing for several years—live performing. This past year, K.T. played a special show at Nashville’s City Winery and made an appearance at the Grand Ole Opry. She has her sights on additional dates, though on a limited basis.

“I want to do more shows, but I certainly don’t want to travel like I used to,” K.T. says. “I do want people to know that I’m still here. That first show I did last year at City Winery was great. It had been about 20 years since I sang live.” The reception there and at the Opry proved overwhelming enough for her to consider a return to the live stage. “My fans are really darling people,” K.T. says, smiling. “They are there every time. The reaction was just unbelievable at the Opry. I got a standing ovation.”

To prove she’s serious about live performing, K.T. makes another admission. “I’ve taken [voice] lessons for the first time in my life,” she says. “You know, I am 20 years older. It’s never going to be the same as it was, but I can help myself a little.”

Now 74, K.T. can reflect on a career that proved as groundbreaking as it was commercially successful. Think about it—what would have been the odds of a 40-plus-year-old female making it in country music in the 1980s? Likely the same as your ragtag beer league softball squad beating the New York Yankees. But K.T. knew what she was up against after moving to Nashville from New York City, where she scored parts in Broadway plays and landed commercial jobs and jingle gigs.

“I was turned down by a lot of labels,” K.T. recalls softly. “I would hear that they liked my stuff, but she’s



K.T.’s wry humor and sense of fashion came through in the cover for her 1996 album, *My Roots Are Showing*. (Below) In 2014, K.T. accepted the Willie Nelson Award at the Texas Heritage Songwriters’ Hall of Fame awards show in Austin.



too old.’ I was kind of used to it, doing commercial auditions in New York. I would get rejected more times in one week than most people do in a lifetime.”

K.T. finally found a champion in Nashville in Dianne Petty, an executive with the SESAC performing rights organization. “She would take my songs around and get the same reactions,” K.T. says. “But she kept on and she got my songs published. This business is about getting to the right person who gets you and understands your whole deal, and Dianne was one of those people.”

Also instrumental in her career was RCA label head



K.T. received a standing ovation after her performance at the Grand Ole Opry, honoring her former label head.

“THE WAY WE DO ‘80’S LADIES’ FOR THIS ALBUM IS JUST PIANO AND MY VOCAL. AND IT IS BEAUTIFUL. IT WAS GETTING TO WHERE I DIDN’T ENJOY SINGING IT BECAUSE IT WASN’T WHERE I WANTED IT. BUT IT’S VERY POIGNANT THIS WAY AND IT DOESN’T SOUND DATED.”

Joe Galante, who played a major part in K.T.’s ascension. “Joe believed in me and gave me free rein,” she recalls. “Only the label could have started that machine and made it as big as it was. I couldn’t have done it by myself, even if I’d knocked on every door in town.”

Not that K.T.’s success kindled any sort of cultural trend. Face it, record labels weren’t suddenly hitting the streets and signing every 40-year-old female they could uncover. For K.T., though, the ride was pretty spectacular. “It was fun,” she says, “although I said to myself at the time that this would not last. Just do it as long as

you can, but it’s not a lifetime guarantee.”

Still, she feels hearty enough to get back into what she fondly calls “the game.” Her health is “OK,” according to her own diagnosis. “I have arteriosclerosis and that’s going to go on no matter what I eat or do or whatever,” K.T. says. “It’s just the name of the game. I’m doing cardio rehab and I feel good after that. But how good am I supposed to feel? I don’t know. I’m pretty perky,” she notes, laughing, “but not like I was at 30. Performers either live long or they die early, seems like. So, I guess I’ll be around a little longer.” **NCW**

BONN APPÉTIT

Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival brought a delicious buffet of musical entertainment to Tennessee on a hot June weekend.

PHOTOS BY CARISSA RICCARDI

Falling on the same sizzling weekend as CMA Music Festival, the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival in nearby Manchester, Tenn., offered one of the most eclectic performance lineups of any multi-day event in the country.

This year country performers like **STURGILL SIMPSON** and **KACEY MUSGRAVES** (both of whom were not at CMA Music Festival) and **A THOUSAND HORSES** were in the same lineup as Americana heavies like **SHAKEY GRAVES** and bluegrass heroes like **THE EARLS OF LEICESTER**. Headlining the event was an impressive array of stars from rock and pop, including My Morning Jacket, Robert Plant, Florence and the Machine and iconic singer/songwriter Billy Joel.



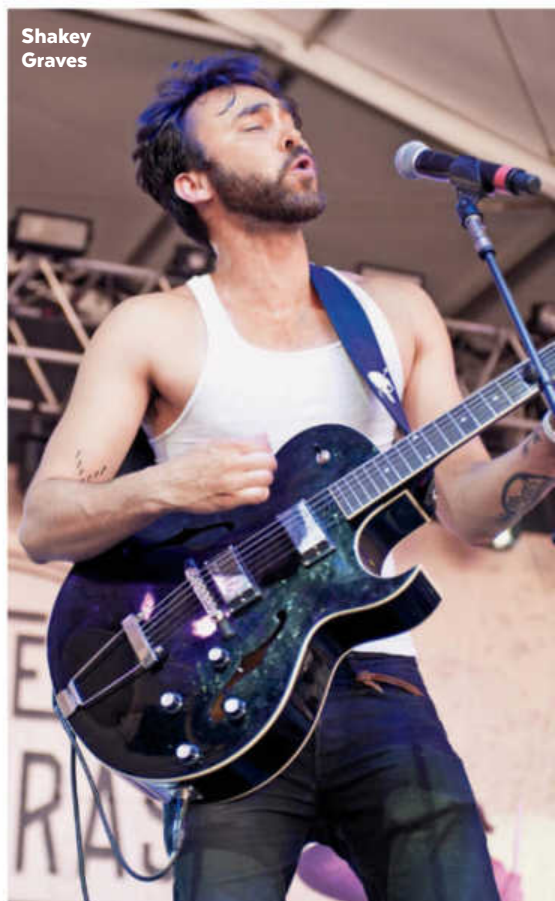
Kacey Musgraves



Punch Brothers

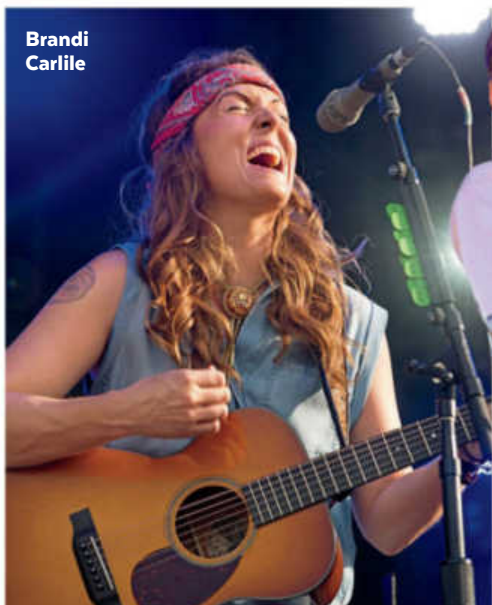


A Thousand Horses



Shakey Graves

Brandi
Carlile



Sturgill
Simpson



Sarah
Jarosz



Béla Fleck and
Abigail Washburn



The
Lonesome
Trio



Gregory
Alan
Isakov



Brittany
Howard of
Alabama
Shakes



Bluegrass Superjam with Trampled by Turtles,
Punch Brothers, Shakey Graves, The Lone-
some Trio, Sarah Jarosz, Rhiannon Giddens,
Béla Fleck and Abigail Washburn



Pokey
LaFarge



Bluegrass
supergroup
The Earls
of Leices-
ter, which
includes
Dobro
player Jerry
Douglas
(right)



Tim by Dimitrios Kambouris/Getty Images; Luke & Barry courtesy Sweet Talk Publicity; Jonathan by Robbie Quinn/ASCAP

DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER

Barry Dean and Luke Laird have a certain comfort level with each other that lends itself to writing hit songs together. They share the same passion for music of all types, so naturally it's hard to predict the final product of a writing session.

One morning, Barry and Luke had a writing appointment with Jonathan Singleton, and their creative muse initially led them to chase an up-tempo song with a pop vibe. A few hours later, they broke for lunch and returned to their song, but by 3 that afternoon, they had reached their limit with what they could do on the tune. "It was one of those deals where we were struggling to finish it because we weren't really fully invested in it, but we kept rolling," says Barry.

Rather than calling it a day, Barry, Luke and Jonathan started tossing out other thoughts, which brought them to writing a lighthearted song in no time. But before they began packing up their things, Luke started playing a very traditional-sounding chord progression on his guitar. It was something that once again opened the floodgates for ideas. "We were talking about nouns and objects, and then Luke just sang, *Diamond rings and old barstools*. It was like all of a sudden, we were off and running on this new song!"

They outlined the first chorus in a matter of minutes, when Jonathan commented that every line was about things that don't work out like you suppose they would. "When he said that, we were like, 'Yeah! Exactly!'" recalls Barry, laughing.

Even though the song was being written more quickly than anything they attempted to get

into that particular day, they did hit one roadblock with one of the song's most crucial lines. "We had a bunch of clever and creative lines going," remembers Barry. "There were probably 15

or 20 different ways to land before we hit the title [in the chorus]. They all felt like they were trying too hard and not honest enough. Finally, we said, *Like me and you*, and we all knew that was what we were trying to say and what we needed to put in there."

After only 40 minutes, "Diamond Rings and Old Barstools" was complete, as was the work-tape. As much as they loved the finished product, the writers hesitated about where the song would go from there. "You can actually hear us on the recording talking about how easy it was to write and how much we loved the song, but we didn't know what its future would be," says Barry. "We knew we had something that we loved, but we didn't know who would be willing to cut a country song."

Tim McGraw took his chance

on the song and made it another Top 5 smash in his career. "We couldn't believe it," Barry says. "We were so excited when we heard he cut it, then when we heard the cut, we were really thrilled!"

"Diamond Rings" is one of my proudest moments as a songwriter," adds Luke. "It was honestly very encouraging to know a song this country could still get recorded and be a hit. If we hadn't been willing to follow through when we found a spark that day, it wouldn't have come out and we definitely wouldn't be here now."

ALANNA CONAWAY

"DIAMOND RINGS AND OLD BARSTOOLS"

TIM MCGRAW

WRITERS: Jonathan Singleton, Barry Dean, Luke Laird



DAINGEROUS DUO

In addition to writing "Diamond Rings and Old Barstools" together, **BARRY DEAN** and **LUKE LAIRD** are also co-writers on the following hits.

Little Big Town
"Pontoon"

Toby Keith
"Drinks After Work"

Jason Aldean
"1994"

Thomas Rhett
"American Middle Class"

The week of August 1, 2015

TOP 25 BILLBOARD ALBUMS

TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	3	MONTEVALLO SAM HUNT
2	4	JEKYLL + HYDE ZAC BROWN BAND
3	2	PAGEANT MATERIAL KACEY MUSGRAVES
4	6	PAIN KILLER LITTLE BIG TOWN
5	7	THE OUTSIDERS ERIC CHURCH
6	5	NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL COUNTRY, VOLUME 8 • VARIOUS ARTISTS
7	8	JUST AS I AM BRANTLEY GILBERT
8	9	DJANGO AND JIMMIE WILLIE NELSON & MERLE HAGGARD
9	10	OLD BOOTS, NEW DIRT JASON ALDEAN
10	11	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
11	1	ABOUT TO GET REAL EASTON CORBIN
12	14	SPRING BREAK . . . CHECKIN' OUT LUKE BRYAN
13	15	CRASH MY PARTY LUKE BRYAN
14	19	IGNITE THE NIGHT CHASE RICE
15	16	GREATEST HITS: DECADE #1 CARRIE UNDERWOOD
16	12	BRINGING BACK THE SUNSHINE BLAKE SHELTON
17	28	THE BIG REVIVAL KENNY CHESNEY
18	23	SOUTHERN STYLE DARIUS RUCKER
19	13	BRONCO CANAAN SMITH
20	18	SOUTHERNALITY A THOUSAND HORSES
21	27	GREATEST HITS SO FAR ZAC BROWN BAND
22	17	COLE SWINDELL COLE SWINDELL
23	20	THE FIRST TIME KELSEA BALLERINI
24	22	35 BIGGEST HITS TIM MCGRAW
25	29	SUFFER IN PEACE TYLER FARR

TOP 25 BILLBOARD SINGLES

TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	2	TONIGHT LOOKS GOOD ON YOU JASON ALDEAN
2	5	ONE HELL OF AN AMEN BRANTLEY GILBERT
3	4	GIRL CRUSH LITTLE BIG TOWN
4	6	KISS YOU IN THE MORNING MICHAEL RAY
5	1	LOVE YOU LIKE THAT CANAAN SMITH
6	8	KICK THE DUST UP LUKE BRYAN
7	3	SANGRIA BLAKE SHELTON
8	9	YOUNG & CRAZY FRANKIE BALLARD
9	10	LOVING YOU EASY ZAC BROWN BAND
10	11	CRUSHIN' IT BRAD PAISLEY
11	13	HOUSE PARTY SAM HUNT
12	12	HELL OF A NIGHT DUSTIN LYNCH
13	14	CRASH AND BURN THOMAS RHETT
14	15	LIKE A WRECKING BALL ERIC CHURCH
15	16	BUY ME A BOAT CHRIS JANSON
16	17	LOSE MY MIND BRETT ELDREDGE
17	18	JOHN COUGAR, JOHN DEERE, JOHN 3:16 • KEITH URBAN
18	21	GONNA WANNA TONIGHT CHASE RICE
19	19	FLY MADDIE & TAE
20	20	REAL LIFE JAKE OWEN
21	22	LET ME SEE YA GIRL COLE SWINDELL
22	23	I'M TO BLAME KIP MOORE
23	27	SAVE IT FOR A RAINY DAY KENNY CHESNEY
24	26	BREAK UP WITH HIM OLD DOMINION
25	24	NOTHIN' LIKE YOU DAN + SHAY

TOP 10 AMERICANA AIRPLAY

TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	1	SOMETHING MORE THAN FREE JASON ISBELL
2	2	THE TRAVELING KIND EMMYLOU HARRIS & RODNEY CROWELL
3	3	DJANGO AND JIMMIE WILLIE NELSON & MERLE HAGGARD
4	4	STILL RICHARD THOMPSON
5	7	PAGEANT MATERIAL KACEY MUSGRAVES
6	6	TRAVELLER CHRIS STAPLETON
7	8	THE RUFFIAN'S MISFORTUNE RAY WYLIE HUBBARD
8	9	THE TRAVELER RHETT MILLER
9	5	SOUND & COLOR ALABAMA SHAKES
10	11	BOUND BY THE BLUES SONNY LANDRETH

SOURCE: AMERICANA AIRPLAY CHART

rdio TOP 5 TRENDING COUNTRY SONGS*

TW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	TAKE YOUR TIME SAM HUNT
2	IF IT TAKES A LIFETIME JASON ISBELL
3	GIRL CRUSH LITTLE BIG TOWN
4	WHAT DO YOU WANT JERROD NIEMANN
5	LIKE A WRECKING BALL ERIC CHURCH

TOP 5 TRENDING COUNTRY/AMERICANA/SOUTHERN ALBUMS*

TW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	SOMETHING MORE THAN FREE JASON ISBELL
2	ANGELS AND ALCOHOL ALAN JACKSON
3	OLD BOOTS, NEW DIRT JASON ALDEAN
4	JUDGE JERROD AND THE HUNG JURY JERROD NIEMANN
5	JUST AS I AM BRANTLEY GILBERT

*DATA FROM JULY 20, 2015

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WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT ROCK/POP STARS (STEVEN TYLER OF AEROSMITH, BRET MICHAELS OF POISON, ETC.) MAKING COUNTRY ALBUMS?



I don't like that. I think you should stick with your genre, and once you wear out your genre I don't think you should try and break into another one just because you feel like it's an easy market for you to break into.

MAKENZIE OLIVER | MURFREESBORO, TENN.



Oh, I love that, because almost all artists and all musicians get into music for one thing or another. When they bring their spectrum and are able to play other music, it shows not only the country world but the rock world that the artists are multifaceted and talented and they can do anything.

**CHRISTOPHER JABLONSKI
SAN DIMAS, CALIF.**

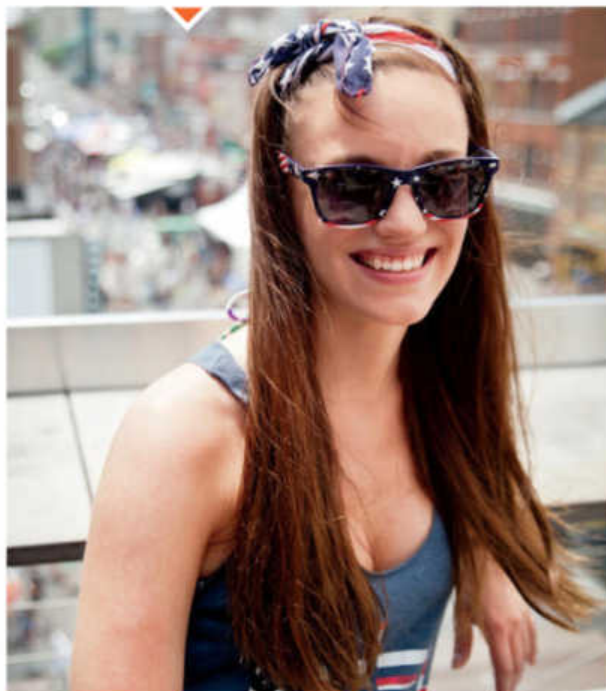
They should try it if they are able to accept the styles and the methods of country music. The people who love country music want to hear this kind of music. So it's no problem to me. But they bring their styles within that, so that's a problem.

**HARRY GANSTER
WARTBERG,
AUSTRIA**



I think that's fine. If Taylor Swift can go pop, why can't they go country?

ANDREA KOWALISYN | NASHVILLE



I think that if they have the skill and the dedication for the actual history and respect for the history of country, by all means. With their powers it brings more attention to country, then it's fine with me.

SIMON NETTLETON | CLEARWATER, FLA.



Shhh...don't wake this precious little one!

Sweet Dreams, Bella

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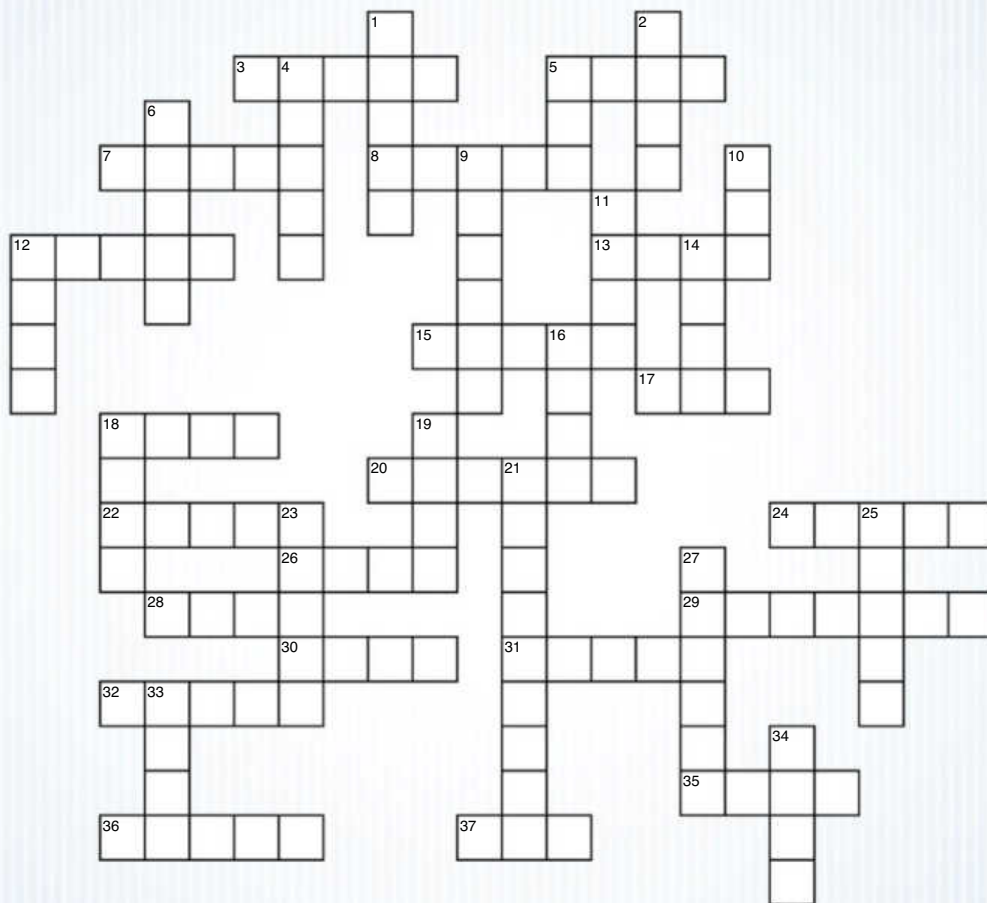
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CROSSWORD

by John Reiman



ACROSS

- 3** "Dime Store Cowgirl" singer
- 5** Clint Black's "Like the _____"
- 7** 2015 movie *Jurassic* _____
- 8** Merle Haggard's "Twinkle, Twinkle _____ Star"
- 12** Kelsea Ballerini's *The _____ Time*
- 13** Toby Keith's "My _____"
- 15** *Summer Forever* artist
- 17** Trisha Yearwood's "Walkaway _____"
- 18** George Strait's "I _____ Everything"
- 20** Ankara, the capital of _____
- 22** "Shameless" singer
- 24** Colombian drug lord Escobar
- 26** Zac Brown Band's "Loving You _____"
- 28** "No Place That Far" singer
- 29** South Bend is here
- 30** Jake Owen's "_____ Life"
- 31** "When Love Finds You" singer
- 32** Charles Dickens' _____ *Expectations*
- 35** 2015 French Open tennis champ Wawrinka
- 36** U.S. Senator Rubio
- 37** To cast an evil spell

DOWN

- 1** Kenny Chesney's "You Had Me From _____"
- 2** Rascal Flatts' "My _____"
- 4** Mountain range in western South America
- 5** "Kiss You in the Morning" singer Michael _____
- 6** Sam Hunt's "_____ Party"
- 9** "Don't Forget to Remember Me" singer
- 10** Reba McEntire's "Going _____ Like That"
- 11** "She Won't Be Lonely Long" singer
- 12** Alabama's "(There's a) _____ in the Night"
- 14** U.S. women's soccer goalie Hope _____
- 16** Gary Allan's "_____ Ain't Always Beautiful"
- 18** Kacey Musgraves' "_____ Time"
- 19** Small and/or weak
- 21** Comic actor Johnny _____
- 23** Crystal Gayle's "Straight to the _____"
- 25** "All About Tonight" singer
- 27** "Sideways" singer
- 33** "Consider Me Gone" singer
- 34** Rochester, Minn., medical clinic

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*Engraved Sentiment
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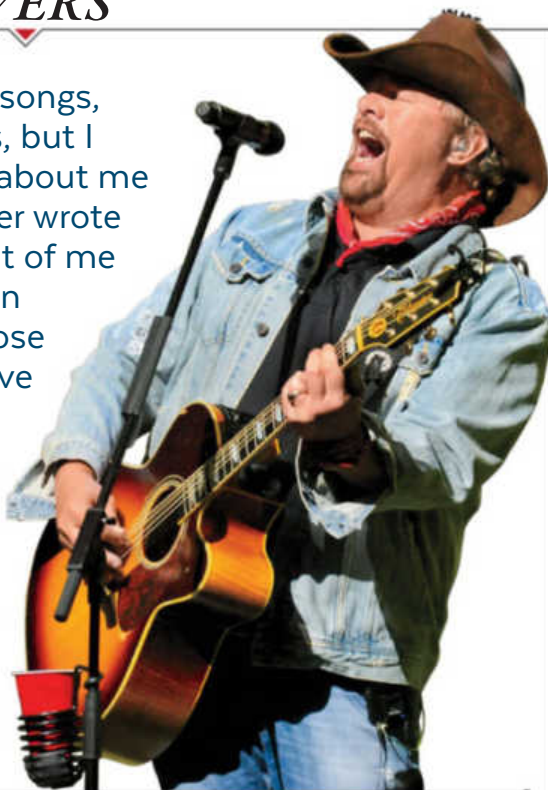
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"I wrote a lot of bar songs, been in a lot of bars, but I never wrote a song about me being in a bar. I never wrote a song about a night of me being in a bar and an experience. Now those experiences that have happened at bars are all thrown into those songs but they're not in chronological order, they're not coming down as the night unfolds."

TOBY KEITH



HULKAMANIA Aspiring country singer **BROOKE HOGAN** isn't the only melodic member of her family. Her professional wrestling dad, **HULK HOGAN**, released an album, *Hulk Rules*, in 1995, and he sang a jingle in a Japanese air conditioner commercial.

ONE MAN

Notable instruments
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76 ARRESTS	80,000+ ESTIMATED ATTENDANCE

"I don't listen to current radio very much. But I do notice that there are a lot of summer songs and drinking songs. And some of them mention T-shirt stains. They



seem to be very concerned about that."

K.T. OSLIN

CROSSWORD SOLUTION (SEE PAGE 60)



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JENNIFER LOPEZ
ACTRESS, MUSICIAN,
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